

Reading the words of this incredible work brought me through a wide range of laughter, tears, power and revelation. I could not put it down! Alan Mesher has created an incredible statement of LIFE. I learned more from this one literary masterpiece, than I had from years of studying metaphysics. I look forward to more!

Stewart A. Swerdlow, world renowned hyperspace
intuitive and best selling author

You have created an irresistible character in Tenzin. I wish I had his phone number when I needed a bit of comforting myself.

Maureen Baron, Vice President and Editor-in-Chief of
Penguin Books and the New American Library, retired

Your story holds so much promise to entertain, to reveal, to educate and inspire.

Susan Schulman, literary agent, NYC

You are clearly a talented writer, there's much to be admired in these pages.

Eleanor Jackson, literary agent, Markson Thoma Literary Agency, NYC

Alan's writing is both poetic and powerful. This story, as it moves from the present to the past, weaves a tale of love and loss, and runs the gamut of deep archetypal emotions that all humans share. It will leave an indelible impact upon you. The book is a must-read.

Dawn T. Clare, Harvard MBA, Clarivoyant Advisor and TV Host

The Silent Steps of Grace is a beautifully written and powerful story of spiritual triumph against all odds. There are many important spiritual truths revealed throughout the narrative that will resonate in your life and inspire you to action. I highly recommend this book to anyone looking for an engaging story that can transform their lives.

John Randolph Price, Best Selling Author and
Chairman of the Quartus Foundation

*At its heart, this is a novel about love. Not the love sold to us through Hollywood movies and greeting cards, but something far more profound: the love that generations of spiritual seekers have sought and that Mesher weaves into a compelling global narrative that spans the twentieth century. The novel's central character, Tenzin, is the sort of irresistibly wise friend that we all wish we had. Reminiscent of Aldoux Huxley's, *Island*, this novel is a must read for anyone seeking a radically different perspective on the world in which we live.*

Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy Assistant Professor of English Literature, CSULA

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The T Zone

Just Who Do You Think You Are?

THE SILENT
Steps of Grace



THE SILENT
Steps of Grace

A NOVEL BY
ALAN MESHER

The Silent Steps of Grace

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Dedication

For all who seek a better life and a better world



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PROLOGUE

*A person is not a thing or a process but an opening
through which the Absolute can manifest.*

Heidegger

DIVINE GRACE HAS many faces. Not all of them are kind. Now and then she is benevolent, sweeping down in the guise of an angel to rescue the terrified petitioner from overwhelming danger. This is Grace the Redeemer, answerer of prayers of last resort, dispenser of mercy, bringer of blessings. More typical is her role as the stern, exacting teacher who drops unexpected challenges into our lives to see whether we will rise to the occasion or let our weaknesses destroy us. This is Grace the Transformer, who purposely refuses to intervene on our behalf, leaving us to save ourselves.

If one day Grace should glance your way in her cold, implacable manner, prepare yourself for hardship and remember this: her tests are premeditated and well conceived. Their purpose is to move you farther along the path to Divine Union and spiritual ecstasy, whether you understand their function in your life or not.

Despite the burdens she brings, Grace always appears at the perfect moment. We see only what we desire. Grace sees what we need. We think of ourselves in terms of the body, when we are really a soul clothed in flesh. Grace understands the duality of soul and body; she sees the soul's hunger to evolve; she recognizes the obstacles in the subconscious, the overhang of past karma, the shadows of unresolved fear and anger, and the cloud of self-doubt that prevents our progress. Her mission is to quicken our evolution, even if we don't consciously want that growth or are unwilling to go to the trouble it requires.

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Grace is the x in life's equation, the one variable that can never be controlled. She sends no notice of her coming and does what she pleases when she arrives. Her sole purpose is to transform our lives and stimulate our growth. She cannot be deterred from her work and is fully faithful to her mission.



CHAPTER 1

The Chosen One

TIBET 1925

TENZIN OSUN HAD been different from the start. He was the chosen one. When he was no more than a seedling in his mother's womb, his father, Naljor, would place his hands on his wife's belly and let the love that filled his heart flow into his unborn child. In those moments of direct contact, the door to the Infinite magically opened, and both parents found themselves swimming in a sea of love that was charged with ecstatic power.

What effect this daily transcendence had on the fetus, no one could truly say. There was no objective way to gauge the immediate reaction or chart its long-term consequences. Tenzin certainly had no capacity to tell his parents if he was aware of the love they were transmitting to him or if he felt the ecstasy they felt. Nor did this really matter to Tenzin's father. He was neither scientist nor researcher. He was convinced, however, that if he could bring the power of the Supreme Being into the equation of Tenzin's birth, his child would be blessed with a great deal of innate wisdom and consciousness.

To Naljor's way of thinking, if he watered the seed with love from the time it was planted, the child would grow to be strong and vibrant. Tenzin's mother saw no danger in trying to bring the Infinite into her child's birth and embraced the idea. When, she thought, had love ever hurt a child?

So, every night, from the time his mother knew she had conceived until the day of his birth, Tenzin's father would rest his hands on his wife's belly, chant the names of the Buddha, pray that his unborn child would be the incarnation of a high lama, and recite stories from the lives of the great saints of their native Tibet. In this way, by deliberate conscious intent, Tenzin's mind and soul were imprinted before he was born with stories of Milarepa, the flying saint, the

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teachings of Buddha, and the great doctrine of the Middle Way.

As a young boy Tenzin seemed quite normal, not at all saintly. He loved to exercise his imagination. He had a soft spot for animals, particularly his dog, and he liked to invent stories of great adventure and conquest. Then he would assemble his friends and his stories would become the basis for play battles. All the children in the village wanted to be included in his mock war games.

Tenzin possessed great charisma, a penetrating mind, and a quick sense of humor. He truly cared for the well-being of those around him and was strongly centered in his being. This powerful combination of attributes made Tenzin the undisputed leader in his circle.

One day when his mother had gone to help her sister in a neighboring village, Tenzin stole the plants she had been growing in earthen pots in the back of their home. He knew that these plants were very special to her. She had raised them with great devotion, intending to plant them in the flower beds in front of the village temple when the time was right. When she returned and found her plants missing she was nearly hysterical. Tenzin had trouble keeping the smile off his face, but managed to look downcast and concerned.

“Come, Momma,” he said. “Let’s take a walk. You’ll feel better if you hold my hand. I’m sure the thief will be caught and you’ll get your plants back.”

What a wise and caring child, his mother thought, so old beyond his years. How lucky I am to have such a son. She took his outstretched hand and they walked together through their village, taking the long way around, coming at last to the temple.

“Maybe, you’ll feel better, Momma,” he said, “if you stand by the flowers that are already here for a few minutes. Then we can go inside and pray for the missing plants.”

Tenzin spoke with such sweet innocence that his mother suspected nothing. He guided her to where he had planted her flowers the day before, in just the order she had grown them in her yard. She stood before them, still lost in sadness, not yet comprehending that they were hers. That recognition took a few minutes more. When the realization formed in her mind, she did not know whether to be angry or amused. Her sparkling eyes said humor but the tightness of her mouth and clenched jaw suggested otherwise.

Tenzin waited out the passing of the storm inside her, not knowing which way she would turn. His heart beat loudly in his ears. He felt her fury at him rising, and he wondered if taking her plants had been such a good idea after all. Then she looked at Tenzin’s smile. She saw the pride he had in his actions, and she knew she could not be angry with him even if she tried. His love completely disarmed her. So she held her son against her and laughed. Then she made him vow he would

never do anything like that to her again. He promised that he would not and went on to do other things that were equally mischievous and kind.

Tenzin had another side to his nature, one that made him very different from the other children in his village. Sometimes, though not often, a mood would come over him. He would grow very quiet and want to be alone. At those times he would walk into the forest, down the secluded path his father had shown him when he was younger, climb onto his secret rock in a clearing under a large tree and gaze at the Himalayas in the far distance. In these moments of reflection, Tenzin's mind would churn with timeless questions. What is the meaning and purpose of life? Why are we here? What was the purpose of my life?

He didn't know any of the answers. He was not yet ten years old. Still, the questions burned, waiting for the time he would be ready for them to come forward and absorb his full attention.

Even at his young age Tenzin instinctively knew that without the reality of a Supreme Truth and our link to deity, no ultimate meaning or real importance to life could exist. Life was not only to be savored; it held a hidden significance that was as yet beyond his grasp. So far, his whole life experience had been in being loved and loving in return. But something else lay in the distance, something more than this. Something he could sense but not yet touch. These moods fell upon Tenzin like clouds that obscure the sun and darken the land. When they passed it was as if the clouds had been shattered by a brisk wind. Light and warmth returned to his soul; only then could he leave his rock behind. But the moods invariably returned, creating more ferment in his soul, sending him racing back to his rock time and time again.

As he grew into adolescence, the restlessness grew with him until it became the driving force in his life. He knew that he must experience Truth first hand. Knowing that the Buddhist saints of his religion and many of the great Tibetan lamas of his country were enlightened and had intimate knowledge of the Supreme Truth did not satisfy him. Their writings inspired him. They had charted the topography, created maps of the mountainous terrain all would have to climb to attain a wider vision.

Studying this rich and varied material shaped the restlessness of Tenzin's nature into what it had really always been, the overriding theme of his existence. He no longer thought of his feelings as a passing mood, but rather as the inner prompting of his life's path. He thirsted for a direct experience of the Supreme Truth. He wanted to know what all the great ones before him had known, feel what they had felt, realize what they had realized. Second hand truth could neither slake his thirst nor empower him. He wanted to climb the mountain himself.

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He was only fourteen years old, but he was already finished with the normal life.

When Tenzin turned fifteen Naljor did the inevitable. The time had come for his son to meet his destiny. He brought Tenzin to the Tsurphu Buddhist monastery in the mountains two days travel from their village and released him to the care and teaching of the great lama who resided there.

Just outside the gates Naljor embraced his son for the last time. He told him of his ecstatic experiences fifteen years before when Tenzin had been growing in his mother's womb.

"I have always wondered," his father said, "If you felt my love and prayers back then and what effect they may have had on you. Now I know. Those prayers have brought you to this gate. The seed has grown into a mighty tree, and now stands tall and true. It is time, my son, for another kind of learning, a learning I can't give you. But this much I do know. Freedom comes when the Divine light penetrates to the core of your being. When you fuse with that energy you will attain the liberation you seek. You are here. Work hard. Realize your true self."

"I will do my best, Father."

"You have always brought your family great joy, Tenzin. Go as far as you can. Let nothing stop you, no matter what befalls you. Perhaps your destiny is to conquer your Self, to overcome adversity, and to attain liberation. But it will not be easy. The spiritual path is neither for the weak nor the shallow. It is the most difficult and dangerous path in the world. Fame, worldly power, and wealth are far easier to attain than the consciousness you seek."

"Yes, father. I know."

"When doubts come and tests confront you, stand still inside yourself. Keep your mind clear. Empty it of the turmoil and conflict that fear always produces. Do not act hastily or you will act unwisely. Be patient! Remember how the Buddha overcame the evil of Mara when he sat under the Bodhi tree. He ignored it, gave it no heed, remained absorbed in the infinite light of Supreme Truth, and won a great victory over the forces of darkness. Move forward when your soul nudges you, when the light guides you, not before."

"I will Father. Thank you for all you have given me. I will never forget your words. I will never forget you, or Mother, or my sisters."

"We gave you what we could, Tenzin. It was very little, I'm afraid."

"You gave me all I ever wanted Father. Your love. Your time. Your wisdom. Thank you. Those were precious gifts."

The time of words was over. Only mutual love and respect remained. The love that had been given with conscious intent fifteen years ago now flowed from heart to heart, amplifying their connection. All was in balance. They embraced as father and son, soul to soul, older and younger, but equal and eternal in the

divine. The circle was complete. It was time to move forward. A new beginning lay beyond the gate.

Tenzin walked the short distance to the monastery wall. At the gate he stopped briefly and turned back. Then he stepped through the portal into the world for which he was made.

Naljor stood before the closed portal knowing that his son's life would now move in a different rhythm and into a sphere beyond his reach. He was proud of Tenzin, certain of his true calling, knowing he had done the right thing by him.

The great shock of his loss now hit him. Tenzin was gone from his life. A vast, dark emptiness swept through him. He walked slowly down the steep hill to the field of stones. A wail rose in his throat while his tears flowed without restraint. He cried for the two days it took him to walk home. As he approached his village he took a deep breath and forced his tears aside. He could not let his wife know how much he missed his only son. She would need Naljor's comfort now. The light of their lives had moved on.



CHAPTER 2

Beyond The Gate

TENZIN WAS EXPECTED. Just inside the door, a silent, young monk with close-cropped hair bowed stiffly. He wore a simple red robe. His face was an impenetrable mask with blank eyes that focused only within. Nothing in the monk's presence offered the opportunity for connection. Tenzin might as well have been standing in front of a statue. The blood fled from his fingertips; his stomach tightened. "Can this place really be my destiny?" he thought.

The monastery seemed cold and austere. The young monk remained as unyielding as the thick stone walls that encircled the courtyard. "Are they all like this?" Tenzin wondered. He tried to mirror his escort, conveying nothing, hiding his feelings. He bowed stiffly in return. No word passed between them.

The large courtyard was nearly empty. Three monks, dressed in the same red robes as his escort, were busy sweeping the stone floor. Their stiff brooms whooshed back and forth in unison, gathering dirt and debris into tidy rows for later disposal. They focused on their work and did not talk and joke or acknowledge Tenzin and his escort.

With each step across the cold stones, Tenzin shrank deeper into his shadow. Could he survive in such impenetrable, austere silence? Had he made a serious mistake? His body screamed at him to turn and run, to find his father, to leave this nightmare behind, to return to the safety of home. Instead, he followed his escort across the courtyard.

An invisible wind swept down the stone walls of the monastery and ruffled his robe. Though the lack of human warmth disconcerted Tenzin, it allowed his more subtle channels of perception to open amid the deep silence of this place. His breath caught in his throat as he became aware of the unseen reservoir of power that pulsed in the courtyard. Whatever occurred in the silent life of the monastery produced a palpable concentration of energy. It was alive; it was

everywhere. Tenzin's body drank it in, just as the leaves of plants drink in the sunlight. His soul had been starving, hiding a secret longing for sustenance, not knowing what that sustenance might be, but knowing that when it arrived he would drink deeply from it.

That time had come.

At first, a pleasant, tingling sensation washed over his extremities. Then the energy spiraled in toward his center, flushing his entire body with heat, filling him with strength, restoring his confidence, and removing his doubt.

The power, however, didn't stop there. With a mind of its own, it reached into places his body didn't know existed. Wave after wave swept through him, each more intense than the last, each drawing closer to his core. Sweat broke from his brow. Rivulets slid down his back. Tenzin thought he might faint, but he remained silent, choosing to conform to the austere code of behavior he had observed. He focused on the discipline of taking deep, slow breaths, and maintained enough control to take one more step, then one more, and not pass out.

At the far wall of the courtyard, they ascended stone stairs to a balcony that ran the length of the wall. Tenzin steadied himself on the sturdy wooden rail polished smooth by an endless stream of hands sliding over the centuries.

His companion, while silent, was not stupid or unfeeling. He had observed Tenzin's labored breathing, the sweat on his forehead, the dampness of his shirt despite the cool day. He saw the slight tremble in Tenzin's hands, but said nothing. Instead, he acted as if he were unaware so that Tenzin might save face.

When they reached the top of the stairs, Tenzin looked back across the courtyard. To normal sight, the drab courtyard was just a stone surface surrounded by stone walls. But Tenzin no longer saw with normal sight. The power flowing through him had burst through the secret seals that limited his perception, and the energy he had sensed in the courtyard was now visible. A shimmering, golden light suffused the entire monastery. Each stone was alive, pulsing with a luminous yet hidden magic.

Tenzin's guide pointed three doors down from where they were standing and motioned that he was to go in. He leaned forward once more in a stiff and formal bow. Tenzin bowed back. The ritual was complete, the first dance between the two young men over. To Tenzin's complete surprise, the young monk smiled and clapped him on the shoulder. Then he turned and walked away, leaving Tenzin to take the next astonished, solitary step in pursuit of his destiny.

The door revealed nothing, suggested nothing, offered no clue as to what waited on the other side. Tenzin stood in front of it for a moment, collecting himself. This was the start of his new life; he wanted to make a good impression. He believed that how we seem in the beginning determines who we are in the

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end. He knocked. A gentle but commanding voice told him to enter. He opened the door. An older monk, thin, bald and bespectacled sat in a chair behind a wooden desk, engrossed in study.

Tenzin's eyes adjusted to the dimmer light in the monk's chamber. A vast intelligence lay behind the wizened face. The old monk's piercing eye's studied him intensely. They missed nothing, yet they overflowed with an innate kindness.

This man, thought Tenzin, is a cross between a lion and a deer.

Instead of being intimidated by the scrutiny, Tenzin found himself wondering what the old monk saw inside him. Somehow, he sensed that whatever it was pleased the monk.

The storm of energy Tenzin had encountered while crossing the courtyard had passed the moment he crossed the threshold. A warm, comforting energy now seeped into his core, and he realized that it was coming from the old monk. The man seemed strangely familiar, but he was unable to find the reason why he felt that way, as if the answer had been locked away in some secret vault in his soul. But one thing was beyond doubt, Tenzin was aware that he knew this man.

"Please sit down." The old monk pointed to a chair on the other side of the table. "I have followed your life for some time," he said. "Your father is a close friend of mine."

"That is strange, sir. He never mentioned you."

"He was not supposed to. He was my student. Nobody knew about our arrangement. Those were my terms. When he was a young man he wanted to come here and become a monk, but his father insisted he marry your mother and lead a normal life. Naljor loved his father, and out of devotion and respect obeyed. Your father never regretted his choice, but the hunger for consciousness runs deep in him." The monk fixed him with his gaze. "As it does in you, Tenzin."

"Yes, sir," said Tenzin. "That's true."

"It was simply your father's time to have a family. His soul needed that experience. He had spent too many previous lifetimes as a monk. In the growth of the soul, balance is everything."

"I never thought about my father as a monk, sir."

The old man laughed. "That's because he's your father. But through his lifetimes as a monk he had come to believe that he could only find enlightenment if he were celibate. He needed to realize that a wife and family need not keep him from his goal. You can find the Supreme Truth anywhere. He needed to learn that loving his family was not an impediment to enlightenment but a vital part of his journey. However, he wanted to make sure that you could make the choice he never had, to seek enlightenment without being encumbered by

external demands and with all of your energy, if that was your wish. You are here, so I assume this is what you want.”

“It is, sir.”

“I taught your father how to enter the consciousness of the forest and mountains and animals around him in meditation. Your father mastered these techniques easily as he had learned them in other lifetimes.”

“That must explain, sir, why animals, even wild ones, always came to him. His fields yielded the best crops. Everything he touched thrived. People in the village would bring their sick animals to him and he would touch them, or hold them if they were small enough. They often improved. The animals loved him.”

“Your father has the gift of unconditional love. Animals have an innate sensitivity about who is angry and mean and who is open and loving. They felt your father’s compassion for them and knew they had nothing to fear. Your father can enter the mind of an animal and know what it is feeling and thinking. He knows what is bothering it, where it hurts.”

“He often spoke to me, sir, about what the animals were feeling. I tried to learn too.”

Tenzin studied the floor. “I wasn’t very good at it.”

“The secret, Tenzin, is to align your soul with what you seek. When you resonate at the same frequency, what you want is yours. All doors that have to open will do so. Your father lives this. Someday you will, too. Be patient. This kind of learning takes time.”

“Yes, sir.”

“After you were conceived your father visited me. He was certain you were going to be a boy. He hoped you would be the incarnation of a lama. I looked into your nature and instructed your father how to quicken your development. I would not have given him that instruction if I did not feel your destiny was to enter this life.”

“Thank you, sir.”

“Now you are here and I can see you burn with the desire for the Supreme Truth. Your yearning is so strong that you have no choice.”

“It feels that way, sir.”

“What did you experience when you walked across the courtyard?”

“I was overwhelmed. At first I felt empowered; then I felt weak, nauseous.” Tenzin looked away for a moment, then met the old monk’s eyes. “After that I felt afraid. I was afraid I would lose control and the other monks would laugh at me.”

The old monk laughed so deeply that his belly shook. “Ah, Tenzin,” he said. “Only the special ones feel the power in that way. You are ready for this life. If

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your energies were dense and less sensitive you would not have noticed anything out of the ordinary. It would not have affected you at all. If someone had told you there was power here and that power could open your third eye, you would have thought they were crazy. Yet that is exactly what happened to you, isn't it? Your third eye opened. I can tell by the light pouring out of your forehead and the brightness of your eyes. What color was the energy field in the courtyard?"

"Gold, sir."

"Bright or pale?"

"Bright, sir."

"What color is my energy field?"

"The same. Around your head there is a great deal of violet."

"Do you ever remember seeing colors around people or places when you were younger?"

"Sometimes, but not often."

"Your third eye opened today because you had developed that faculty in other lifetimes. You needed only a brief encounter with a higher, more powerful energy field than you had previously experienced. Most of the monks here would give all they possess to open that center. The energy in the courtyard cleared the emotional blocks in your body so your spiritual energy could rise and awaken you. That's the heat you felt rising in your spine."

"I wondered what that was."

"Most people are very blocked emotionally. Their unresolved issues prevent their Kundalini from being active. Kundalini is the spiritual energy that resides at the base of your spine. When you activate your Kundalini correctly you evolve rapidly, establish soul contact, and expand your consciousness. However, it is imperative to remove your emotional blocks before you attempt to activate Kundalini. If you activate Kundalini before removing your blocks, it could enter the wrong channel and make you seriously ill for years, even for the rest of your life. In extreme cases it might kill you."

"That's terrifying, sir."

"Life is terrifying, Tenzin. That's why it's important to do things correctly. The right preparation leads to the right result. When Kundalini lies dormant, growth moves at a glacial pace and requires lifetimes to accomplish what someone with a correctly activated Kundalini can achieve in a few years. Before today, the time wasn't right for your Kundalini to be active. You had not released your blocks and there was no one to guide you if you had. The fact that it opened here, on your initial contact with the power in the monastery, is an important sign."

"I'm sure you're right, sir. But it was scary. I didn't know what was happening."

"It always is. You seek enlightenment, you court peace, but you reap the

whirlwind.” The old man chuckled. “Not what you expected, is it? Kundalini is a fierce fire that threatens your very existence.”

“It certainly felt that way, sir.”

“Consciousness comes when least expected. Not when you want it, or when it is convenient for you. It comes when it’s time to come. It always changes your life. At first, the change may not feel very good. In fact, it may seem to make your life much worse. In the end, it always makes it better,” The old man craned his head and looked out through the high window in the far wall at the peaks in the distance. “Remember what I am telling you, Tenzin. It will be important to you later.”

“Yes, sir.”

“Your father’s wish came true, Tenzin. You are, indeed, the incarnation of a lama.” He waited while Tenzin digested this information.

“Do you know who I was, sir?” Tenzin said.

“You must discover that for yourself. I will not tell you. When the time is right you will know. That will come later. This time,” he said, “I’m the teacher.” With that the old monk’s belly shook so hard with laughter that Tenzin feared he might fall out of his chair.

“Yes, sir,” Tenzin replied. But the import of the Rinpoche’s words passed far over his head.

“One more thing, Tenzin. Your first challenge will be to turn your restlessness into a deep peace. Peace is the ground we must cultivate if we wish our soul to grow. Here we work in ways that help us develop our special gifts and talents. That way we move in harmony with our nature and deepen our peace. Peace is the basis of all expansions in consciousness. Few have it, so few advance.”

“Yes, sir.”

“I’m glad you’ve come. Go downstairs and enter the big door on your left. You will be shown to your living quarters and given the monastic schedule. Every morning, after breakfast and meditation, you will report here to me. We will study herbs and healing. In the afternoon you will perform your monastic duties. In the evening you will pray and meditate with your fellow monks. We start tomorrow.”

“Yes, sir,” said Tenzin. He bowed in respect.

Tenzin tried hard to control his emotions. The slight smile at corners of his mouth gave him utterly away. The old monk saw everything, revealed nothing. He, too, was happy. The young man had returned as he promised he would.



Thirty years before, in this same monastery, the monk’s older brother, Trungpa, had taken ill one day with a high fever. He lost consciousness and sank

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into a delirium that no herbs, prayer, or healing could reach. For days he burned with fever, drenched in sweat, lost in some far place from which no one could bring him back. On the seventh day, he sat bolt upright in his bed, suddenly lucid and back from his journey through the gates of hell. He called out at the top of his lungs for his brother. The fever had left him weak and frail. He was a shadow, all bone, with sunken cheeks and too-bright eyes that burned with riveting intensity.

“Little brother,” he said, even though Doezen was the taller of the two. “I have been diving in some dark, putrid place reliving old wars, killing and being killed. I thirsted for the blood of my enemies, put prisoners to the sword, tortured those who committed crimes against those I fought for.” Trungpa pressed his palms to his eyes. “I loved the killing. I was a mercenary, Doezen. I killed for money. I was filled with bloodlust, swept up in arrogance and madness. I acted without heart or compassion. I loved war. I loved power. In later lives I was the victim. I fell into the hands of my enemies. They tortured me beyond belief. I have been on both sides of hell. This fever is no accident. It is karma, a gift to cleanse and redeem the dark stains in my soul.”

“Trungpa, you are weak. You need to save your energy and...”

“Shh!” his brother commanded. “I have seen the future. Listen carefully. Another war is coming, one that will reach this monastery and end our way of life. You will be here when it comes. But I will not survive this sickness.”

Doezen remembered that moment as clearly now as then. He could still feel his brother’s eyes burning into him as he foretold the future.

“But I will come back and find you, Doezen,” Trungpa said. His fingers pressed deeply into the flesh at the back of Doezen’s neck; his eyes locked into Doezen’s mind. “I will incarnate before this war comes. I promise you, I will come back. You will know me when you see me again. But I don’t know if I will recognize you. That was not shown to me.”

Trungpa unclasped his mala, the string of prayer beads their mother had given him. He had worn it since he had entered the monastery. He passed the mala to Doezen. “This is yours now. Remember me, brother. Remember what I have told you.”

“But Trungpa,” Doezen said.

Trungpa did not hear him. He had fallen back on his bed, depleted by his final exertion. Doezen had no way of knowing if his brother’s words were the product of the delirium or of truth. There would not be time to find out. His energy spent, Trungpa lapsed into a coma. He died the following day.

Some sixty-five years had flown since Doezen and his brother had come to the monastery. Doezen had been four years old, his brother nine. An avalanche

had taken their father while he crossed the mountains. Their mother, shaken, alone, and overwhelmed with grief feared that she wouldn't be able to provide for her two young sons or survive the coming winter. They had little wood, and less food, and the snows would soon come. So she went to the abbot of the nearby monastery and asked him if the monastery would take her boys. The abbot had known her husband since he was a young man and thought well of him. She told the abbot that she could go to live with her sister and her sister's family in a small village several days journey from the lamasery but there was no room there for her boys. The abbot visited with the children, saw merit in them. He understood the terror in their mother's face and agreed to take them in.

From the time they arrived at the monastery, full of fear for their future, and grief from losing both parents, Doezen's older brother had been father and mother to him. At first the two boys had clung to each other, sad, stoic, and in shock. But the abbot and other senior monks had nurtured and loved them, made sure they got lots of attention and time to play. Gradually, they learned to love monastic life because of the monks who loved them. Many years later, Trungpa, the older brother, became a Rinpoche himself, a senior teacher, possessing a deep nature and much wisdom. When the old abbot died, Trungpa accepted more administrative responsibility. Trungpa was charismatic, revered by his peers, a good organizer, and honest beyond reproach. One day he would surely become the abbot. But then the fever struck.

So long ago, thought Doezen. He stood now in the doorway and watched Tenzin descend the stairs until his head was out of sight. Thirty years since Trungpa's passing. Now Doezen was the Rinpoche and head of the monastery.

Time, he reflected, is a circle. It doesn't move forward in a line, event following event, detached and disconnected, so that an event that took place thirty years ago has no connection with an event that happened today. Time curves until the perfect moment arrives for the past to return and complete its purpose. The real business of time is redemption. Trungpa had kept his promise. What was next?



CHAPTER 3

Going Home

TENZIN FOUND THE big door just as the old monk had described it. He put his ear against its old timbers, hoping to learn what to expect on the other side. But the massive door surrendered no secrets of the life it sheltered. Silence seemed to live at the heart of everything in this place. Tenzin breathed deeply, collecting himself yet again, and opened the next door into his future. What he found on the other side hardly surprised him. Nearly three dozen monks worked at various tasks in absolutely silence.

He paused and watched from the shadows of the vestibule; a heavy bell hung on the wall just behind him. Then he heard the first human voices other than the Rinpoche's since entering the monastery. From a chamber somewhere off the far side of the hall came the unmistakable hum of monks chanting. Many voices combined into a constant, low-pitched, repetitive sound. The power of the rhythmic chanting calmed him, and he enjoyed a moment of comfort, for once being neither intensely scrutinized nor deliberately ignored.

The spell provided a brief interval in which he could step back, let down his guard, and assimilate his new surroundings. Like many similar moments, this one arrived unexpectedly and disappeared too soon. No sooner had he begun to feel comfortable than the bell began to ring. Harsh peels reverberated off the walls in the vestibule.

Shock waves crashed through his nervous system. He turned to look behind him. His new Rinpoche stood in the dark shadows of the doorway, ringing the bell with great intensity. The monks stopped their activities and looked toward the alcove. They bowed first to Doezen and then, almost as an afterthought, to Tenzin. They, too, seemed shocked by the disruption to their routine.

"Brothers," announced Doezen. "This is Tenzin, the young man I have told you about. He is here to join us."

Doezen strode past Tenzin into the hall. Tenzin followed with uncertain steps. The monks formed a circle around their teacher and his new student. Doezen introduced each of the monks to Tenzin. There were thirty-five in all. After each introduction, Tenzin bowed to that monk in silence as the monk bowed to acknowledge him. All the new names slipped through Tenzin's mind, like drops of water between his fingers. He stopped trying to take in any more information and, to his great surprise, he began to sense with each bow the essence of each monk.

He read their varying degrees of centeredness, clarity, warmth, and honesty as easily as he could read a book. How unique and different each one was. His heart, which had always been large, seemed to have grown eyes and ears and nostrils. Names ceased to matter. He no longer even heard them as they were spoken. Instead, he listened to what he felt and responded in nuances that were neither verbal nor physical but touched each monk's inner essence.

With each monk, the feeling in Tenzin was similar, yet unique. It was similar because of the love that flowed from him to each of them and unique because each monk's essential qualities drew from him a loving response that was specific to each of them. The result of this simple and austere ceremony was far deeper than he expected. Tenzin bonded with his brother monks in a place that required no words or gestures. He had taken from each of them a packet of energy and made it a part of himself. And he had given each of them a packet of his energy in return. The equal exchange promoted in Tenzin a profound sense of belonging.

After the introductory ritual had been completed, a senior monk named Ishan deftly touched Doezen's arm, waving him aside. They retreated silently to the back of the hall. The rest of the young monks gathered around Tenzin, talking and joking. Soon the hall was filled with the animated voices of young men; their laughter echoed off the stone walls. One might have thought Tenzin had been with these monks for many years judging by the ease they shared in each others company.

"He has come back to us, hasn't he?" said Ishan. "Just as he promised. I remember what your brother said before he died. It seems like yesterday. I always thought he would return, but I must admit . . . as the years passed . . . I almost forgot all about it. Then, when I saw that young man, I knew immediately who he was. Same energy, same eyes, same intensity and depth. You must have known right way."

"Yes."

"It is clear that he has no idea of who he is. This is a test for you too, is it not? You must be patient. You ought not to tell him. It would not be in his best interest."

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“I agree. But if it is a test, it is a small one. If I were an impetuous young man, maybe, but I learned long ago to accept what comes and not to fight the current. Everything will unfold in its own time as the Supreme Truth intends, not according to my demands. My preferences are unimportant.”

Ishan’s eyes were smiling when he spoke. “It appears you have found your center at last.”

“So it would seem,” Doezen said. A half-smile illuminated his face.

“Better late than never,” said Ishan, slipping the needle in deeper.

Doezen didn’t bite. “It is a blessing to be free of fear and ambition. It’s why we chose this life, is it not? When we were young men we were filled with hope and ambition. Now we enjoy knowledge and experience. The Great Way has become part of us. We are living it. It is no longer a hope or dream, like it is for the young ones. Look at them. So eager, so filled with life, so wanting attainment. Each with his own struggles and tests to endure. If we are lucky to live long enough we will see who succeeds, and who is broken on the rocks of adversity. I pray daily that they all find the strength, will, and love to overcome their tests.”

“Do you remember what Trungpa said just before he died?” Doezen asked.

“The prophecy about the war?”

“Yes.”

“Let us hope it doesn’t happen.”

“But if it does, we must follow our soul, no matter the personal cost. Agreed?”

The two old monks’s eyes locked on each other.

“Agreed,” said Ishan.

Gales of laughter interrupted their conversation. The old monks turned to see Tenzin holding court, a young lion of considerable power regaling the monks gathered around him with stories of his family and friends from the childhood he had just left. Tenzin had already won the acceptance of the other monks.

A wide smile lit Ishan’s face. “The young lion has returned to his pride,” he said. “The others recognize him as one of their own.”

“Not only as one of their own, Ishan, but as their leader. See how they love him already. He has done nothing but greet them. Yet look how they admire him.”

“It’s quite phenomenal, isn’t it? If we didn’t know the history behind it, we might be even more amazed. But we know the link that ties past to present,” said Ishan.

“Truth is stored in the soul, not the mind,” said Doezen. “Without the soul, we see only with the mind and can’t perceive the connectivity of all things. We see things in isolation rather than as parts of the whole. Separation is an illusion. Physical sight does not translate into wisdom. When we see through the eye of

the soul we see the truth. The right thing happens when we let go and no longer need to control the outcome.”

“I have always found it puzzling that so few learn how to let go, Doezen. All you need to do is purify the mind of negative emotions.”

“The world does not see things as we do, Ishan. Worldly people rush to get ahead of each other. If they are not rushing, they feel insecure. They equate freneticism and stress with success. Acquisition is more important to them than spiritual attainment; they ascertain their self-worth by what they possess and give no thought to their inner life. They think that to have is to be, when the truth is just the reverse. To be is to have.”

Ishan chuckled. “You are describing a world that is upside down.”

“What do you think? Here we have spent a lifetime letting go. They have spent lifetimes spinning webs of karma they will have to unravel in future lifetimes. Because their values are different and their vision narrower, they waste their opportunities for real growth. When they die, what can they take with them? Not the money. Not the power. What is the point of this life, Ishan, if we leave it empty and incomplete inside? If we do not heal the gaps in our being while we are here, where will we go when we die? No place happy or permanent, that’s for certain. Lack of wholeness only guarantees our rebirth. The turning of the great wheel of earthly life will continue. The lessons will have to be repeated. Karma will have to be faced. In my mind the richest man is he who has attained consciousness. That is the only thing that cannot be lost. There are far better worlds waiting for us than this one.”

“You make an elegant case, old friend. But we are here in this monastery living a special life. Our traditions, our religion, and our community, all reinforce and support our values. Ours is a unique and special situation. What would life be like for us if we were out in the world, without any of this to guide and support us? Would we be any different?”

“You pose an interesting question, Ishan. One that is not within my experience. I cannot answer it.”

“Nor is our way of life in their experience. How can you have a change of consciousness without the right environment to support and encourage it? If you can’t alter someone’s experience, how can he learn a different way? Most people don’t want our way of life.”

“You are right, of course. The future will bring great and unexpected changes to the world. There will be tremendous upheaval. People will be forced to change their ways of life or perish. We can only hope that out of the future suffering a new consciousness will be born in the world. A dark tide will sweep over the entire planet. No place will be left unscathed. Of that I am certain.”

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“What makes you say that, old friend?”

“For the second time in this century a world war rages. We are safe for now because we are not important to anyone. But there will be more wars. There always are. The ancient texts speak of this time and the times to come. But the most important reason I feel this way is that Trungpa has returned. He has come back to fulfill a purpose about which he knows nothing.”

Doezen put his arm on his friend's elbow and led him deeper into the hall, farther away from the crowd of monks around Tenzin. He needn't have taken such precautions. Tenzin and the young monks had forgotten that the two old monks were still there.

“Ishan, what I am about to say must be held in confidence. It must never be spoken of in the monastery and we will never speak about it again. Do you agree?”

“Of course.”

“I believe that Trungpa has returned for an important reason. His spirit is very powerful. The world will need him. He hasn't come back just to fulfill his dying promise and see his younger brother again. I don't need his care anymore and he would know that. This place is only where he begins. He has returned to re-established his wisdom and prepare for his future.”

“If that is true, he has chosen well. I could not imagine a better teacher for him than you, old friend.”

“We shall see. I hope that you are right. But we have been indulging ourselves too long. Look at the young ones carrying on. If we don't bring them back to their work they will soon forget all the discipline that they have learned. The work of years will be wasted. Young Tenzin is a bad influence on them!”

Doezen slammed his walking stick into the ground, but the hidden smile dancing in his eyes suggested something else as he emphasized his point to the assembled monks.



CHAPTER 4

The Power of Doubt

MOST PEOPLE TOUCH joy only once in a great while, if at all. For the next decade Tenzin lived a life of routine joy nearly every day. He was doing what he was meant for, learning to live in harmony with his nature and developing his gifts. Even the part of his life that consisted of routine — work, meditation, chanting — kept bringing new insight and growth into his life. He was never bored. He was far too busy growing.

His environment, while regulated and controlled, was highly stimulating. He didn't have to be there. The question of leaving, in fact, never entered his mind. The monastic life offered him what he had long desired. He felt inspired, touched by a higher power. He loved and respected the elder lamas, particularly Doezen, who had become his teacher and mentor. Indeed, he had come to revere Doezen as deeply as he did his own father.

He never knew Doezen to shirk his responsibility or be less than truthful. He was strong and sharp when necessary, gentle and kind the rest of the time. Nothing escaped him. There were no shortcuts. Everything had to be done the correct way. When Tenzin's youthful impulse to do something quickly, and therefore imperfectly, superseded his developing judgment, Doezen would point his finger in his face, and admonish him in a strong, authoritative voice, "The short way is the right way," he would say, "no matter how long it takes!"

Doezen' deep wisdom was extracted from a lifetime of experience, observation, and study. He doled it out to his young charge a little at a time. He was very careful not to overwhelm his students with what he knew, but to give them just enough to whet their appetites so that they would always want more.

Once, in the early years of their relationship, Doezen took Tenzin with him to a nearby village to visit a woman who had never had her period. She had recently married and was desperate to conceive. The trip to her village required a

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four hour walk. Doezen was preoccupied and inwardly absorbed. He spoke not one word the entire journey. Tenzin had learned not to interrupt Doezen when he focused his attention inward. Tenzin simply mirrored his teacher's behavior and maintained his silence.

The woman shared a small, two room house with her husband. They visited briefly with the husband, then Doezen entered the bedroom where she was resting. Up to this point, Doezen had only allowed Tenzin to assist him when he treated people with physical complaints, not emotional ones. Under Doezen's training Tenzin had become quite adept at physical diagnosis and treatment with herbs and teas. This time, Doezen brought Tenzin into the bedroom with him.

The woman was bloated and in a great deal of pain. Doezen instructed Tenzin to place his hands on her ankles. He then knelt over her, stroked her head and spoke in a soft, soothing voice. With the young woman more centered, Doezen shifted his focus to her lower abdomen, placing one hand under the base of her spine, and the other hand over her ovaries. A surge of heat flowed out from Tenzin's hands into the woman's legs. The room pulsed with power, and two pillars of red and gold energy rose behind Doezen like ethereal fire. Energy poured down from those pillars through Doezen and into the young woman.

While the energy poured through the woman Doezen instructed her to breathe deeply and make sounds from her throat as if the source of those sounds came from her pelvis and ovaries. She choked and coughed out short, little moans with great difficulty. Her difficulties did not discourage Doezen. The power continued to pour into her, melting the blocked emotions trapped in her ovaries. Her legs trembled. Soon she began to scream and kick uncontrollably. Doezen pushed her on when she showed signs of weakening.

After some time, the screams stopped and her body quieted. The pillars of energy behind Doezen now became gold and white. Doezen gently placed one hand placed over the woman's lower abdomen and the other over her heart. She seemed transfixed; her face glowed. Tenzin watched in awe as her soul, immersed in gold light, rose out of her body.

A few minutes later, Doezen withdrew his hands from the young woman's body, ending the flow of energy and concluding the treatment. With no more energy to sustain her out of the body experience, the woman's soul settled back into her body. The negative emotions that had clogged her reproductive system had been released. She was now in balance; freed from the trauma that had troubled her.

Tenzin realized that the woman's trauma had separated her from her soul. That separation had contributed to her suffering. Somehow Doezen had opened her, removed the obstruction and reconnected her to her soul. He had achieved

all this without surgery, loss of blood, or drugs. Just a simple laying on of hands. Yet both the process and the outcome had been profound.

Doezen waited a few moments for the young woman to reorient herself. “Yeshi,” he asked gently, “what happened when you were a young girl?”

“I was eight,” she said. Her eyes looked into the distant, painful past. “A friend of my older brother took me into the woods to pick flowers for my mother. She loved fresh flowers. After we had entered the forest his face changed. He became a monster. He threw me down and raped me. He said if I ever told anyone about it he would kill my mother. I never told anyone.” Her eyes returned to the present. She looked at Doezen. “Until now.”

“The trauma is over. There will be balance in your life from now on,” said Doezen. “You will have three healthy children. Two sons and a daughter.” Then Doezen did something Tenzin had never seen him do before. He bent down, cradled the woman’s head in his arms and kissed her gently on the forehead.

“Rest now. A new life is coming.”

On the long walk back to the monastery, Doezen described the preparations he had taken to heal the young woman. “Thank you for respecting my silence, Tenzin, and for not interfering with it during our walk to the village. I was working with her inner self to bring her buried memories to the surface. That is why it proceeded quickly once we got there. She had been prepared inwardly, although she had no knowledge of it.”

“Rinpoche, how can that be?”

“The soul, Tenzin, functions in ways that are hidden from the mind. For the mind to glimpse the soul it must be quiet and at peace. Only then can the soul enter. That, of course, is the purpose of chanting and meditation. The Buddha said that the thoughts of the mind are like pearls strung on a necklace. They shine and capture our attention. When we let go of our thoughts and turn our attention to the space between them we glimpse the truth. The truth exists outside the thought process.

“The soul exists outside the conscious mind. Who you are is not found in your conscious mind but in your soul, for that is where your truth lives. To live your truth the mind must serve the soul. Most people’s lives run counter to their truth. Their mind leads and they never see who they really are. They never find their soul. That young woman’s mind was absorbed in her suffering. Suffering keeps the mind stuck in patterns that exclude the soul.”

“Rinpoche,” said Tenzin. “Did Yeshi see her true self when you healed her?”

“She had a taste of who she really is. Sometimes the Supreme Truth gives us terrible experiences so we can realize better things later on. Don’t ever forget that, Tenzin. In Yeshi’s case she had been raped in her last life as well. The

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unresolved emotion from that trauma, lying dormant in her body, attracted another traumatic rape experience in this life. She is now free of both traumas. She is whole again. Sometimes it takes a negative to clear a negative.”

“But, Rinpoche, couldn’t the healing of the past rape been accomplished in a gentler way, so she wouldn’t have had to be raped again?”

“You have to be aware of what hides inside you if you are to heal it. Few people are conscious of their past life issues, although everyone has them. It takes a bright light to reveal an obscure trauma. The Soul sees things from a much wider perspective than does the conscious mind. When the kind of trauma that young woman had to face is transformed, one experiences a great leap in wisdom. What once divided us now integrates us. When we heal our pain we move higher in the light. Our highs get higher. Our lows also get higher. That’s the evolutionary journey. The farther we go on our path, the more joy we will eventually experience. The key to the ascent is to remove unresolved and unproductive emotions. Wholeness and integration come before enlightenment. There is no other way.”

“Yes, Rinpoche.”

“I’ve always thought that whatever happens is best, Tenzin. But it’s up to us to make the best of our circumstances, to learn from what has happened and go on, no matter how cruel things may seem at the time. Look at the beauty that has come out of this young woman’s experience. She is free and will now have children. We were the instruments of her healing. Our reward for helping her is that we feel light and happy. We allowed ourselves to be used for a higher purpose and it lifted us up. When we are truly open to the Light, everyone benefits. If the world sought love as much as it sought power, few of the problems that plague humanity would exist.”

“Yes, Rinpoche.”

“This kind of work brings great joy, Tenzin. The world is selfish. It functions on the belief that we are all separate and disconnected from each other. Most people pursue money, power, and fame thinking it will make them unique and happy. However, that behavior is the real sacrifice because we lose contact with our real self when we live like that. Greed is a curse. To serve others is actually a very selfish thing as it serves the real Self in all of us. Think about it. What we did nourished the truth in you, me, and that young woman. We served the Supreme Being and we were given exactly what we needed for doing it.”

“It is true, Rinpoche. I feel wonderful.”

“Remember what I am about to tell you. Regardless of what happens to us, we agreed on the soul level to let it occur. On the soul level we make our choices based on their potential to aid our growth. That is the only consideration, not

how it will affect us emotionally or physically. Whether or not we know it, the soul controls a great deal of what we experience. Since the bridge between the soul and mind doesn't exist in most people yet, they are unaware of what they have chosen to experience in their lives."

"That is a difficult idea, Rinpoche."

"Tenzin," laughed the Rinpoche, tapping Tenzin on the shoulder. "I am old. I know what happens when things get difficult. It's one thing to listen to and digest the truth when things are calm and life is normal. It's another to remember it when things fall apart and fear arises. When that happens you will forget what I have said. But you must remember to remember it! One day your ability to remember this truth may be the difference between life and death."

"You are scaring me, Rinpoche. What do you mean?"

"We do not find the true meaning in things until we understand emotionally what has been said intellectually. Concepts and principles must be lived and digested before they become wisdom. The truth ripens in its own season. Since you don't yet have the emotional understanding, your job is to remember these ideas. They are seeds. Plant them deeply inside you. They will blossom as you grow. That is all."

The Rinpoche quickened his gait, signaling an end to the conversation.

Did I tell him too much? Doezen thought. Can Tenzin handle this difficult wisdom? Will he be able cradle it inside him until the time comes to use it?

He had dark forebodings about the future and strange, inarticulate fears for Tenzin. He couldn't give these feelings shape or define them, but he was wise enough not to dismiss them. In the only way he knew, he was preparing Tenzin for the trials ahead.

Their conversation had slowed their walking so that they reached the heart of the desolate plain that lay between them and the monastery at dusk. The most dangerous part of their journey was still in front of them. Jagged rocks, haphazard outcroppings, and deep, ice-lined crevasses threatened their safe return to the monastery. And now a moonless sky was rapidly turning black. In trying to prepare Tenzin for the future, Doezen had left them both unprepared for the present. The irony of the situation was not lost on him.

The rocks were piled everywhere, with no rhyme or reason. Deep chasms lay where least expected, making it extremely difficult to navigate in the dark.

They already had been walking among the rocks for the last half hour. Should they turn back or go on? Only a few minutes of dim light remained. Should they retrace their steps and wait until morning before resuming their journey, or walk across the plain in total darkness?

There was a bit of the gambler in Doezen and he hated the idea of turning

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back. He wanted to press on. He called to Tenzin, who was walking a bit behind him to catch up.

“Tenzin, we have to make a decision. We can turn back now and cross the plain tomorrow morning or we can continue on and cross it in darkness tonight. It could be risky to continue on in the dark. Would you like to go on or turn back?”

To the young caution is boring, adventure appealing.

“Let’s go on, Rinpoche.” The sparkle in his eye was unmistakable, even in the dying light. The Rinpoche permitted himself a brief, unguarded smile.

“Very well. We shall press onward. Stay close to me, Tenzin. Follow me step for step. Walk exactly where I walk. One misstep could mean death. You must stay alert and focused. Send your energy ahead and feel where the danger lies. Pay attention to what your intuition tells you and to what you feel. If you stay centered and unafraid you will feel where the crevasses are. Stay centered and it will be easy. If fear overtakes you all could be lost.”

Tenzin followed the Rinpoche step for step, as he had been told. While they still had the light he could see where to place his feet. The routine was simple. But when the sun left the sky and the darkness enveloped them, the matter became entirely different. Tenzin now had to sense his way. He stepped in the wrong places; he twisted his feet on rocks he didn’t think were there; he even fell a few times. Tenzin began to think that this wasn’t such a great idea, after all. He could be seriously hurt. Before he knew it, he had fallen into a quagmire of fear. Doezen slowed his pace and spoke gently to Tenzin. He talked about the monastery and his friend Ishan. This settled Tenzin somewhat but he was still agitated and out of balance.

“Tenzin,” Doezen asked. “What do you see up ahead?”

Tenzin’s eyes were focused on the ground ahead of him. He was trying desperately to place his feet exactly where Doezen had placed his. He didn’t bother to look up. “I can’t see, Rinpoche. It’s too dark.”

Doezen’s voice became firmer. “Look again, Tenzin. What do you see?”

Tenzin looked up. What he saw made him gasp. “Rinpoche, there is a light coming out of you! It’s lighting up the ground in front of your feet!”

“That’s right. Now stop worrying. You’re like an old woman afraid of mice. You’ve lost your center. Fear has overcome you. What have you learned from this?”

Tenzin continued to stare at the light. “Fear is my enemy,” he said.

“And where does fear come from?”

“From within.”

“Next time when you face a situation that kindles your fear, you must make a conscious choice. If you decide that fear can’t control you, it won’t. But if you let it take you over, you will lose your center as surely as you have tonight.

People who give into fear always stumble and fall. How can it not be so? What is out of balance breaks down. Therefore, face your fear and retain your balance. Acknowledge it and say to yourself, what of it? It won't stop me. It will only keep me alert and vigilant. Then your fear will pass and your center will prevail."

"Yes, Rinpoche," said Tenzin. He looked at the dark ground for a moment, then raised his eyes to watch his teacher's light.

"Remember, fear is not a tree, a leaf, or a boulder, Tenzin. It is a feeling. Feelings are fluid. We control them in the same way we pour water into different containers. Water always conforms to the shape of its container. If we forget to be vigilant and conscious, fear will soon ignite our emotional body and take control of us. Our emotional energy will conform to the shape of our fear. But if we are vigilant and dismiss our fear, it will settle down and remain a minor wave of no consequence. This exercise keeps us centered. Whether our fear turns into a wave of no consequence or a tidal wave of tragic proportions is up to us. We are responsible for what we feel. Never lose your head and get swept away by fear."

"Yes, Rinpoche." Tenzin was feeling somewhat better, though still embarrassed by his failure. He looked up again. The lights of the monastery lit the top of the hill in the distance. He would not soon forget this place. He had not known such fear since he had crossed the courtyard when he first came to the monastery. Even then he had retained more control than he had mustered this night. He wondered how he would be able to face Doezen tomorrow after failing so abysmally tonight. Had he lost the respect of his beloved Rinpoche? He couldn't abide the thought.

Doezen interrupted his internal dialogue, "Stop it, Tenzin! Practice self-control!"

The words pierced Tenzin like bullets. He was repeating his mistake, just after he had resolved to never do it again. How subtle the mind was and so difficult to defeat.

"Relax, Tenzin. You are young and want immediate perfection. It takes time. A great deal of time. Mistakes are opportunities to take corrective actions. By learning from your mistakes, you will become more conscious. We can't grow without failure. All attempts at mastery fail in the beginning. When a baby learns to walk, does he walk perfectly right away and never fall? No, he falls many times before he masters walking. You will fail many times before you master yourself. It is expected. So what."

"Yes, Rinpoche."

"Learn to relax your attitude toward yourself. The Supreme Truth doesn't expect you to be perfect. Why should you? The Supreme Truth loves you in spite of your faults. Remember to accept yourself, whether or not you are

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perfect. Love is unconditional. Do not put the condition of perfection on it. If you do so, you will always be tormented and never find what you seek. Learning will come easier if you don't pressure yourself to be perfect from the beginning."

They had reached the monastery gate. Food, rest and safety awaited. Tenzin couldn't wait to fall into his bed, close his eyes, and bring a close to this night of lessons.



CHAPTER 5

The Dark Sky

IN 1950, THE threat of war hung over Tibet like a heavy shroud. After a period of diplomatic intimidation, the Chinese invaded in October to “free the Tibetans from the burden of an enslaving feudal system.” The Chinese destroyed six thousand monasteries and killed hundreds of thousands of people, if not more. As the invasion progressed, reports of terrible pillaging at other monasteries arrived. Chinese soldiers burned holy books, plundered religious treasures, forced monks to fornicate with nuns, and then executed them. Entire monasteries were put to the torch. The news from the outlying villages was no different with many reports of burning, killing, and raping. With every day the threat to the monastery increased. The monks knew the Chinese were coming. They knew they would not be spared. The senior monks prepared as well as they could for the destruction that would soon be visited upon them. Holy books, religious treasures, and relics were secreted out of the monastery and hidden in safe places.

Tenzin’s worries extended beyond the walls of the monastery. His village and family were near Chamdo in the east, closer to the Chinese invasion force than he was. He had received no communication from them in weeks. He didn’t know if they had escaped, been killed, or were under Chinese martial law. The fates of his family, his country, and his monastery were in the hands of forces beyond his control. He could do nothing but wait and worry.

One evening, when it appeared that the Chinese would be at the gates of the monastery within a few days, Tenzin was summoned to Doezen’s room. He walked along the high balcony overlooking the courtyard. The great Himalayan peaks loomed in the distance. For several days he had had no contact with Doezen. Doezen had rarely left his chamber. The senior monks had all joined him there, planning for the preservation of the monastery’s treasures. Whether

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they lived or died was now in the hands of the Supreme Truth. They could prepare for the inevitable and accept their fates, nothing more.

By the time Tenzin arrived, the other monks had left. Doezen waited at his desk in the same place and in the same chair as he had during their first meeting. The light was dim, but that did not prevent Tenzin from seeing the deep lines of exhaustion etched upon his face.

“I have missed seeing you these past several days,” Doezen said. “But we are at war now. Everything has changed. You heard what happened at other monasteries?”

“Yes, Rinpoche,” he said, his jaw throbbing. Defiance served now as his only bulwark against overwhelming sadness.

“Tenzin,” Doezen continued, “You are not a warrior. Not in this lifetime assuredly. I know the spark burns in you, but you are more valuable to Tibet alive than fighting to your death.” Doezen’s eyes looked upon the person he loved most upon this earth. “You, and others like you, are the future of Tibet. You are young and full of promise. Our national treasure is not our books and our religious art. It is in young monks like you and the light you embody. One day that light will be very important to the world.”

“But, Rinpoche...”

Doezen raised his palm. “I have loved you Tenzin, as if you were my son. If I am guilty of anything it is of being partial to you. One day you will be a source of wisdom and strength to a great many people. If you remain here, all of that will be lost. The Chinese would never let you live. Therefore, I have prepared for your escape.”

“But Rinpoche, I cannot leave. There is my family from whom I have not heard in weeks. There is the monastery and there is you. This is my life. I cannot go, Rinpoche. I cannot. Too much depends on me.”

“Too much depends on your going, Tenzin. Use your head. This is no time to be driven by emotion. Would you throw away what you have learned and destroy all that you have become and have yet to become? That would be so much waste. If you stay and perish, all the knowledge and training that has been given to you will be lost. You cannot protect anyone. You cannot save anyone. You are powerless. You will die. Your death would only serve the Chinese because it would help them bury our future. It is not your time to die, Tenzin. You must go. This is not an act of cowardice I’m sending you on, but a mission that will require great courage on your part. For a time, you will find living far more difficult than dying.”

“But Rinpoche, what of you? What will happen to you? Come with me.”

Doezen shook his head. “I am an old man, Tenzin. I have had my life. What

happens to me does not matter. I am not afraid to die. Life and death are of the same cloth of creation. Each inevitably turns into the other. I am much closer to my death than you are to yours.”

“But how will I ever know what happened here and what became of my family? I cannot leave without seeing them, Rinpoche.”

“To attempt to see them would mean certain death. The Chinese are in their village. Other units now march in our direction. Reports indicate they will arrive tomorrow. I have held you back as long as I could. You must leave tonight. I am sending Nawang with you. The two of you are to go to India. I have written to my friend Emily Chase, who lives in Los Angeles, for assistance. Several years ago she came here to study. I was her mentor. We developed a close friendship. She will help however she can. You are to make your way through the Himalayas to Delhi. Contact a Mr. Sean Wilson at the American embassy there. He has a ticket and visa for you. You will go to America. Someone will write to you about what happens here. You must go now. We have packed food and clothes for you.”

Doezen used his arms to help himself stand. This was the most difficult moment of his life. Death would soon sweep across the field of stones. His older brother, reincarnated as his student, would leave him once more. They would never meet again. Doezen was a realist. He knew the end was near. Only one choice remained, one true way to go. His heart knew that he had chosen rightly for Tenzin and for himself. Each of them must now embrace this time of final parting. Tenzin must move to a different life; Doezen must move beyond life. His place was here. He had no regrets. He was not afraid of dying or in the manner of his death. Whatever was, was best. He had lived by this truth. He would die by it. He had no anxiety or fear for himself, but he did feel a sense of apprehension for Tenzin’s future.

I have not been pure enough with him, thought Doezen. I have allowed myself to become attached, and so I worry for him. I can’t help him if I am worrying constantly about him. Still, Doezen admitted to himself, if I had to reprise the past, I would love him in the same way.

He prayed that Tenzin would find his destiny in America. Their relationship had finally come full circle. The student must now strike out on his own. Doezen opened his arms wide. Tenzin moved into his mentor’s embrace and felt the last strength in the frail old arms as they held him.

“Remember Tenzin, no matter what happens in your life, it is an opportunity for growth. As long as you are centered, the Supreme Truth will be with you. When negative emotions surface, clear them from your system and regain your center as quickly as possible. The road ahead will be difficult, but it is your road.

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You have the strength to overcome every obstacles that you will meet. Use whatever comes your way to quicken your evolution. Everything that happens in life is fuel for growth. Do not forget!”

“Doezen Rinpoche, I will never forget you. I will never forget this place or my family or Tibet. I will never forget. I Will NEVER FORGET! Not now. Not Ever.”

Tears moistened Tenzin’s cheeks. The two men clung to one another for a silent moment while the sun set in the window behind them. A loud knock shattered their last moment together. Nawang burst into the room, breathless. “Rinpoche, I am sorry to intrude. But Ishan ordered me to come for Tenzin. The Chinese have been sighted nearby. We must leave immediately.”

“Ishan is correct, Nawang,” answered Doezen. He released Tenzin from his embrace. “It is time. You must both go now. Take care of each other. Remember that wherever you go in the world, you are ambassadors of Tibet. The Light must not disappear from this world. Remember who you are. Keep your head high and your center intact. You are the future.”

“Yes, Rinpoche,” both young men said. They were subdued and scared, facing into the harsh wind of a bleak future.

Doezen reached behind his neck and unclasped the strand of prayer beads, the mala, which he had worn since he was a young boy in the monastery. “Tenzin, I have little to give you to help you on your journey. Take this mala. It will not shield you from the wind and cold in the mountains, but it may remind you of your core identity when you most need to remember where you came from and what you represent.”

“Rinpoche, please, I cannot take it. That mala is a part of you. It carries your energy.”

“That is why I want you to have it.”

Doezen kissed the mala and solemnly placed the beads around Tenzin’s neck. Summoning his remaining strength, he ordered them to go. The young men walked out of Doezen Rinpoche’s room for the last time and closed the door behind them. Their hearts were breaking but they appeared cool and detached as they walked along the balcony and down the ancient stairs for the last time.

When they reached the courtyard, Ishan gave them their packs and travel instructions. They were to cross Monla Kachung into Bhutan and from there proceed to India. The journey would be difficult and dangerous but it was the only way to avoid the Chinese. Ishan embraced them and bid them make haste. The hour was late, the moment full of peril. Chinese patrols had just been sighted on the field of stones beyond the monastery. Every moment counted.

The other young monks accompanied them across the courtyard. At the gates they all bowed to each other. Only Tenzin spoke.

“We will never forget you.” His voice was low, near breaking. Summoning the last vestiges of his willpower, he ripped himself away from the life he loved and hurried into the enveloping darkness. Walking quickly so Nawang could not see him, he broke into tears, feeling smaller and more scared than he had since arriving at the monastery gates with his father more than ten years earlier. At that time he had had a home and a family nearby who loved him. Now he had no sense of what he was losing or where he was going. In a moment, his life had gone from predictable to unknowable; he was setting out on a journey with no timetable and only a vague destination. Neither success nor failure were certain. He held his life in his own hands now. No one else could help him. He and Nawang walked alone in the darkness. A biting wind seared their cheeks.



Three months later, Tenzin and Nawang stumbled into Delhi. They had worn through their shoes, exhausted their food stores, and nearly frozen to death. Nawang’s feet were nearly black with frostbite, his back ached, and he could hardly breathe because of his racking cough. The only good thing in their adventure was that they had no time to worry about what was occurring at the monastery. They had been too busy surviving.

One night, while walking in the moonlight, Nawang had slipped and nearly fallen into a deep crevasse. Fortunately, Tenzin had been practicing his Rinpoche’s teachings about staying centered. He felt Nawang starting to fall a few seconds before he slipped. He reacted immediately, reaching out for Nawang so that when his legs buckled, Tenzin already had his arms around Nawang’s chest. Panting, Tenzin dragged him the few feet between death and safety.

“Tenzin, how did you know?” Nawang asked, when the shock left him and he could breathe normally again.

“I almost fell once,” he said. “Just like you did now. Rinpoche taught me to stay centered when crossing the field of stones one night when there was no light. I learned a painful lesson that night. This time I was prepared.”

“You saved my life. Maybe someday I will save yours.”

Tenzin only nodded. “We had better keep going.”

They continued down the mountain along the edge of the crevasse under a dark sky laden with stars and the thin sliver of a silver moon. At the edge of their hearing, the wind whistled as it wound through the rocks. The only steady sound was the muffled whisper of their feet plodding slowly through the snow.

When the moon’s light grew faint, they pitched the tent Ishan had packed for them and crawled inside for a few hours of desperately needed sleep. Sometime later, as the moon slunk beneath the peaks of the Himalayas, Tenzin drifted out of a restful sleep and into a disturbing dream.

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He was in a small cave, deep inside the inner earth. How he got there was a mystery to him; there seemed to be no way in or out. Then a hidden door opened in the wall to his left and a terrifying figure stepped through it. Panic swept through Tenzin, leaving him nauseous and dizzy. The creature was taller than any human he had ever seen, a large, white lizard with wings, a tail, and two hands, each with three elongated fingers. Its eyes were snake yellow; its mouth cruel and ferocious. It reeked of decaying flesh. Slimy spittle dripped from its tongue. The creature stared long and hard at Tenzin. When it finally spoke, its words poured out in a harsh, guttural voice.

“My work in Tibet is child’s play compared to the misery I will visit on the rest of your world. I bring destruction and the end of freedom. I bring war - endless war, and the complete enslavement of the human race.” The creature paused, and then hissed contemptuously. “The most spiritually evolved country in the world was no match for me. My forces overran it like it was an ant colony. Your ‘light’ has no power. It is nothing more than a dream of goodness and love that doesn’t exist and never did. I am everywhere. I control the world. I control its governments. Its wealth. Its military. Its media. Its religions. I control communist countries and democratic ones. I control tyrants, oligarchs, dictators, kings and queens, presidents, prime ministers, and Popes. They are all MY vassals. Humanity has been entranced, its mind controlled, its spirituality desecrated, its health compromised, its wealth stolen. YOU HAVE NO HOPE! There is no way out of the darkness that permeates your world. The only path to survival is complete submission to me. Now kneel and kiss my hand, fool. I am your only hope!”

Tenzin shuddered. “Who are you?” he somehow managed to ask. His knees shook and his body trembled. He dreaded the answer.

“Who am I?” hissed the creature. “You don’t know? You are more the fool than I thought.” The creature gathered itself, straightened its back and stood at its full height. A terrible darkness loomed behind its malevolent yellow eyes.

Tenzin stepped back, his eyes bulging.

“I am the Lord of Darkness,” roared the creature. “And this is MY world. Renounce the Light or die. I am everywhere. I will appear in the eyes of people you love. I will turn them against you and laugh as they betray you. There is no escape. Kneel or die. This is your only chance.”

With his heart pounding, Tenzin sat up and shook his head. His temples throbbed with shooting pain. Waves of adrenaline surged through him. Cold sweat trickled down his spine. Was his dream real or was his subconscious symbolically releasing what he’d endured since the Chinese had overrun Tibet?

The question never really left him, not that day or in the days and years to

come. It lingered in the back of his mind until, many years later, a young man he had never met arrived with the answer. For now, he could only try to fall back asleep and hope that the creature would not return to haunt him in his dreams.

The two young monks arrived at the American Embassy in Delhi on a Tuesday morning. Tenzin asked the guard at the gate for a Mr. Sean Wilson as his rinpoche had instructed him. Of course, he asked in Tibetan, and the officer had no idea what he said. Tenzin made several further attempts with the same results. Finally the soldier gave up and just said “No comprendo, Joe.” He called in the embassy interpreter. The interpreter knew some Tibetan and Tenzin was able to tell him what he wanted. The interpreter took them to a waiting room and told them that Mr. Wilson would be along shortly. The room was warm and comfortable and furnished with two sofas and several chairs. Tenzin and Nawang collapsed on the sofas and fell immediately into a deep sleep, the first real rest they had had in weeks.

Finally, at 2:15 in the afternoon Sean Wilson appeared, rumped and distracted. An unexpected emergency had kept him on the phone to Washington all day.

He wondered, what have we got here? More trouble? Tibetan monks. Not good. Not my day, that’s for damn sure.

He cleared his throat loudly. That did no good. The young monks were too deeply asleep to notice. So much for being nice. He shook them until they opened their bleary eyes.

Tenzin and Nawang awoke to an impatient, angry stranger standing over them. They sat up quickly, eyes wide.

“Waiting long, gentlemen?” the stranger asked He didn’t wait for an answer. “It’s been a long goddam day. And you two aren’t going to make it any easier, are you? Well, follow me and we’ll see what’s to be done for you. I can’t imagine it will be very much.”

Tenzin and Nawang didn’t move, but just continued to stare at the hostile man. Sean Wilson released a sigh of exasperation, pointed at them, and motioned for them to follow him.

Wilson ushered them into a cramped office. Folders, books, and dispatches cluttered every horizontal surface. Tenzin and Nawang were at a decided disadvantage except for the letter Tenzin had with him. Fortunately, the letter was in English. Tenzin pulled it out of his traveling bag and handed it to Wilson. As he read, his hostility disappeared.

“Damn. Emily Chase, well what do you know? It’s your lucky day, fellas. She’s very connected. Her husband was the ambassador here for many years. This letter says there’s a ticket for L.A. waiting here for whichever one of you is

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Tenzin. Says here that she's taking you in. Pretty amazing. Pretty damn amazing. Guess we'd better find out more. Just a moment."

Wilson flicked the switch on the office intercom. "Joan," he said "See if there is anything in our files from Emily Chase, would you."

A few minutes later, a slim, attractive woman wearing a blue suit and a big smile handed Wilson a crisp manila folder. The file contained a letter for Nawang, another for Wilson from Emily Chase, a visa for Tenzin, and an open plane ticket from Delhi to Los Angeles. Wilson read the instructions carefully. Tenzin was being granted special status from State as a representative of the Tibetan government. Wilson was no longer distracted.

"Which one of you is Tenzin?"

Tenzin nodded uncertainly.

"Well, fella," said a smiling Wilson. "You've got some damn good karma. You're going to the States. Wish I were going with you."

Tenzin smiled back and nodded. He had no idea what Wilson had said. He only knew that the man wasn't being mean anymore.

Wilson shuffled through the remaining contents of the file and handed the other letter to Nawang. It had been written by one of the senior monks shortly after their departure. Nawang read it slowly, blinked, and then read it again. His mouth fell open. He could hardly comprehend his good luck and his sorrow.

Dear Nawang,

Doezen Rinpoche believes that Tenzin's destiny is in America. His path calls him there. It is not so for you. You are to go to Darmasala where all the young monks from the monastery have been sent. See Tenzin off, then go there as quickly as you can. We have received word that your family escaped and is also at Darmasala. Unfortunately, we have had no word about the people in Tenzin's village or his family. No one can get through. The area is crawling with Chinese. Tell Tenzin that when all that remains is his connection to Supreme Truth to focus on that. It will see him through. Now is the time for courage. Stay centered, both of you, and all will be well.

Nawang handed the letter to his friend. Tenzin felt a sense of dread as he took it.

He didn't want to read it but knew that he must. As he read the letter the color left his cheeks. He tried to stiffen up and hide his hopelessness. The trek through the Himalayas and across India had taken everything he and Nawang had, brought them beyond the endurable, and in the process bound them tighter than brothers. They had faced death, fear, hunger, bitter cold, and injury. They only had each

other. Now that they had reached safety they were to be separated, wrenched apart by a relentless grace that had taken over their lives. At that moment Tenzin doubted that there was a Supreme Truth. Everything and everyone he loved had been ripped from his life. He wondered if any of them were still alive. My parents, my sisters, nephews and nieces, Doezen, Ishan, the others? Why must I leave here without knowing their fate and go half way around the world to a place I don't know? Life was evil and cruel. He was slipping down a dark well. It was as if someone had decided to manipulate the controls inside his body, diminish his power, and extinguish his light. He was powerless to stop it. He could do nothing but stiffen his back and stare at the wall.

Sean Wilson picked up the phone.

"Joan, call the airlines will you and find out when the next scheduled departures are for Los Angeles. We've got a young man here with powerful connections at State for whom we need to make a reservation. He doesn't speak English. He seems to be in a lot of shock. Then call Doc Otis and tell him I'm bringing him a customer. I want him to take a look at the other fellow's foot right away."

"Yes, sir. I'll get right on it."

Wilson hung up the phone and motioned for the monks to follow him. He lead them to the infirmary. Dr. Otis examined Nawang and gave him two packets of antibiotics, one for his feet, the other for his cough. "He doesn't have frostbite, Sean. He's got an infection under his nails that caused his toes to swell. The antibiotics should heal that as well as his walking pneumonia. How he ever made it over the Himalayas with all that beats me. He'll be all right soon enough."

"Thanks, Doc. I'll get Willie to translate."

When they returned to Wilson's office a list of flights to Los Angeles was on his desk. "Well, let's see. The first one's out tomorrow at 9 am. Think that one is going to be a little sudden for you. Looks like you two need a few days of rest and food. There's one leaving on Saturday at 8 a.m. You'll have one connection in Hong Kong, another in Honolulu. That gives you some time to rest. We'll put you on that one."

Wilson flicked on the intercom. "Great job, Joan. Get this fellow a seat on the 8 a.m. flight on Saturday morning."

Four days later Tenzin boarded the plane for Los Angeles. He had no way of knowing that he would never return to Tibet. While Tenzin was being driven to the airport by Sean Wilson, Nawang was on his way to Darmasala, accompanied by a reporter from the Times of London, there to do a story on the Tibetan holocaust. Wilson knew the journalist and had arranged for Nawang to travel with him.

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Sean Wilson was not an unfeeling man, despite his initial negative reaction to the two young monks. After he calmed down and let go of his troubles he could see their pain and shock. He also saw Tenzin's decency and goodness. Within the context of his cool professional demeanor, he did what he could to help them. He was astute enough to recognize something special in Tenzin.

This one, he thought, has something pretty rare. I feel better just being around him. That's a magic not many people have.

When he left Tenzin at the boarding gate at the Delhi airport he did something uncharacteristic. He gave Tenzin a hug and wished him luck in America.



CHAPTER 6

The New World

LOS ANGELES 1951

NOTHING TENZIN HAD ever experienced could have prepared him for Los Angeles. He had grown up in a remote, technologically backward mountain village. He had lived in an isolated monastery for over a decade. Los Angeles was complete bewilderment. A huge, seemingly endless sprawl of people, buildings, roads, and automobiles. It was hot, noisy, crowded, and chaotic. Delhi was like that, too. But at least India and Tibet shared a border and a similar spiritual heritage. Here, people looked at him strangely. Wearing the red robe of a Tibetan monk guaranteed that he would stand apart and attract strange looks from the locals.

Emily Chase met him at the airport. She was in her early seventies, with snow white hair, well-coifed and carefully styled with a slight wave, her one remaining concession to vanity. Her clear blue eyes still sparkled. She wore little makeup, except for a touch of lipstick, and a dark blue dress with a single strand of pearls around her neck. She stood as near to the door to the tarmac as she could, but many other people had arrived ahead of her.

The passengers poured off the plane, eager to reach their destinations. Tenzin found himself caught in the middle of a throng, pushed and buffeted about like a leaf on a swollen river. Gradually, the crowd thinned, people drifting here and there to meet family and friends, leaving him to move forward at his own pace. He stopped for a moment and scanned the crowd wondering if his contact was among them. How would he recognize her? An older woman's face stood out from all the others. She watched him intently. Was this Emily? He didn't have long to wait. She waved her arm in greeting. Her warm, smile lifted his spirits immediately.

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Emily Chase was a person of means, high intelligence, and integrity. Her bearing commanded respect wherever she went. She was a woman who told the truth, believed in the innate goodness of people, and treated everyone she met with equanimity and kindness, from household help to Presidents and Prime Ministers. Nothing about her presence suggested anything shallow or remotely superficial. If what she had to say made people uncomfortable, upset or angry, so be it. The truth was important and she would never compromise herself by speaking dishonestly. She was forthright and direct in her delivery. Her character simply left no room for pretension, duplicity, or condescension. Whatever course of action she decided upon was well-considered, not in terms of how people would react or what would secure her personal interest, but in the truth of the situation, and how it could best be stated. In this respect she thought like a monk.

On the surface, the elderly patrician woman and the young Tibetan monk were an unlikely pair. Despite overwhelming differences in age, ethnicity, culture, and social standing, they took to each other immediately. A strong and lasting connection resonated between them deep below the surface, as if two mutual powers had finally met. Each was aware and respectful of the other's sovereignty; each knew instinctively that they complemented rather than conflicted with each other.

Tenzin reminded her of Doezen whom she had met some forty years earlier when her husband had been posted to India. He felt the same to her, as if he were shaped by the same mold of compassion, vision, and power, only younger and less developed. From the moment she saw him at the airport, looking tired, lonely, and forlorn, Emily could feel the ancient wisdom of his land rooted deeply in him. He exuded a combination of majesty and purity that was rare in this world. An indefinable strength lived deep within him.

The spiritual power emanating from him reminded her of the hunger she had felt when she had gone to Tibet that first time. She had been spiritually starved then, and in need of deep emotional healing. While her pain had been addressed and healed long ago, the hunger in her soul existed even now. On her return to America years ago, she had deliberately set it aside to live a normal life. That hunger now walked up to her and looked her in the eye. The re-awakening of her spirituality jarred and surprised her. She hadn't expected it, hadn't expected much of anything at all, in fact. She had thought she'd take care of this young man as a favor to Doezen until he could find his own way in the world. She would give him shelter and help for a year; that should be enough.

Doezen had warned her about Tenzin in a letter to her some months ago. "I am sending you someone of great power," he had said, "although he doesn't yet truly know it. This young man is exceptional. He's the best of our lineage,

the fruit of an ancient tree. He will go far, though he will likely encounter great difficulty in the beginning. I would appreciate doing what you can to help him.” Then came the lines that caught her attention and that she had ignored as quickly as possible. “A deep inner connection exists between you and him; I believe you will find that you love him with all your soul. Do not be afraid of that love. It has been given to help you grow. This relationship is about a destiny that is bigger than either of you. You will not grasp it for a long time. You may never fully understand it or see it in its entirety. But you will feel it. Follow your intuition and all will unfold as it should.”

She knew, of course, that Doezen always told the truth. He had written it simply and clearly, but still she didn't fully believe it. Her life was comfortable and orderly; she did not need it unsettled just now. She longed only to live out her days in peace, not have her life made complicated and difficult again. She had done enough for others, for her husband and children, and for anyone else who had come into her life. She had always been helpful and in great demand by charities and good causes. Now, after a long life, rich in experience and service to others, she wanted time to do as she pleased. So she folded the letter and put it away. And with it, any thoughts of more spiritual awakening.

Over time, she dismissed much of what Doezen had written. She focused instead on the particulars of the matter: getting Tenzin a visa and a plane ticket and making arrangements with the embassy personnel in Delhi to look after him when and if he got there. She was well aware that getting out of Tibet during the Chinese occupation was difficult and was surprised when everything fell into place as easily as it had. Getting a visa to come to the States from Tibet was not a routine matter. Only Emily's ingenuity and the use of well-placed connections in the State Department allowed her to accomplish it. Rather than waste time, she had gone directly to the top, calling an old colleague of her husband's, Clark Whitman. They had not spoken since her husband's funeral eight years ago, but when she told him about her problem and what she needed, he had smiled and said, “Emily, consider it done. It will be my pleasure.”

A week later she received a call from his secretary. Tenzin's visa was waiting at the embassy in Delhi in the office of one Sean Wilson. Of course, it helped that Tenzin was being sponsored by the wife of a former ambassador to India and would be staying at her house in Santa Monica when he reached America.

As Tenzin approached her in the waiting area, she could sense his pain, despite his attempt to appear inscrutable. At that moment, the mother in her took over and, against her better judgment, her heart opened to let him in. She was powerless to stop it. All her reservations and determination not to get personally involved disappeared.

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How could I have imagined that I would be able to keep my heart closed to him, she thought. Doezen was right again. For that matter, I can't remember him ever being wrong about anything.

Tenzin was less than three feet away now. There was no more time for self-recriminations. It was time to say hello.

Emily lived close to the ocean in the most affluent section of Santa Monica, north of Montana Ave. They didn't speak much on the drive. Her Tibetan was worse than rusty; Tenzin's English was nonexistent. But the silence between them was not uncomfortable.

If anything, it was an easy and nourishing time and neither one felt self-conscious.

She slowed the car and turned into the driveway of a large, Spanish style house with yellow stucco walls and a red tiled roof. The house had three floors. Spacious gardens of beautiful flowers and plants embraced the front and sides. Orange, lemon, pomegranate, and peach trees stood in the back yard. The thick, green lawn was well manicured and highlighted by several flower beds that were changed often so that the flowers in them were always in bloom. A yellow stucco wall surrounded the property, and a wrought iron electric gate opened onto the circular drive.

Tenzin had never seen anything like it, except perhaps the embassy in Delhi.

Compared to the monastery and the homes in Tibet, Emily's home was a great palace. While very beautiful, the house was another shock in a steady series of shocks, each made more difficult to assimilate because he had no one of a similar perspective with which to share it.

Emily showed Tenzin to a corner bedroom on the third floor. Two large sets of French doors opened to the west and the north, each with a magnificent view of the Santa Monica Bay. The doors led out to a balcony at the back of the house furnished with several easy chairs, a table, and many pots of flowers. The room and the balcony were awash with afternoon light. A wisteria vine twined along the railing, mingling the fragrance of blooming flowers with the salty smell of the sea. A soft sea breeze wove the various scents into a pungent bouquet. A few butterflies perched lazily on the flowers, waving their wings from time to time, drinking in their nectar.

This room was Emily's favorite in the large house. She didn't visit it much anymore, but when she needed solitude or wished to meditate, she always came here.

Her housekeeper, Maria, brought food, and they ate a light lunch on the balcony, speaking in Tibetan. She still remembered a few words, but spoke poorly. Then she left him to sleep. It was obvious he was both exhausted and underfed. She made a mental note to tell Maria to feed him well and to fatten him up. This young man needed more flesh on his bones.

Once he was finally alone, without the crush of other passengers around him, or even the presence of this kind and bright woman, Tenzin faded quickly.

He removed his clothes and climbed into the clean, large bed. The steady breeze blew in from the ocean; the distant crashing of waves comforted him. He fell into a deep and dreamless sleep. He slept for twenty hours, the first really satisfying sleep he had had in many months.

Knowing that her Tibetan was inadequate and his English non-existent, Emily had found a professor at UCLA fluent in Tibetan. She met Professor Thomas Kerr for lunch a few days later. She expected to have a boring business meeting in which they would make the necessary financial arrangements, establish a tutoring schedule, then go home.

The professor was already seated when she arrived. He rose to greet her. Thomas Kerr was a tall, thin man with a premature balding pate, light hair, wire rimmed glasses, and sparkling blue eyes similar to her's.

"Mrs. Chase."

"Professor Kerr."

He extended his hand. "Call me Thomas."

"If you insist."

"I do. Otherwise I would feel compelled to call you Madam Ambassador."

"I see you've done your homework. But I've never been an Ambassador. My husband was."

"A small detail, easily overlooked."

Emily laughed and they sat down to lunch.

"I know you're a cultural anthropologist, Thomas, and that you speak Tibetan."

"And Russian," he said. "And Chinese. And Spanish."

"That's an impressive list of languages."

"And alphabets I'm afraid. It's enough to make you mad. You said this young man was a monk?"

"That's correct."

"Do you think he'd let me meditate with him?"

"I have no idea. You'll have to ask him."

"What's he like?"

"He's quiet, but he has great presence. You feel it immediately. Now let's work out the financial arrangements."

"There's no need for that. I'll get more from him than he'll ever get from me. We'll meet weekday mornings from ten to eleven."

"That is unacceptable."

"Why?" The professor's jaw dropped.

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“I don’t accept charity. This is a financial arrangement. I insist on paying for your expertise.”

“But what of his expertise? I should pay you back for that.”

“Very well,” Emily said. She smiled. “Consider it deducted from your fee. I will pay you forty dollars an hour rather than sixty.”

“That’s too much.”

“It’s either that or no deal.”

“Not fair,” he said. “But I accept.”

“I thought you might.”

They laughed heartily and enjoyed dessert.

Emily let Tenzin have a few days to adjust to his new surroundings. Then she drove him to UCLA and introduced him to Prof. Kerr. She was well aware of the state Tenzin was in, knew what he had already lost and what more he stood to lose. Because of all that remained unknown, she decided to go into action immediately. She knew firsthand what idleness can do to the mind. She was not about to let him feel sorry for himself. Better to do something, almost anything, than to be idle and to let fear and panic take you down. Beside, the sooner he acclimated himself to America, the better. She was certain that being with Thomas Kerr would be good for him in many ways.

Emily had learned all about death and grief and tragedy from her life experience. While she and Randall were posted in Delhi, their youngest child, their only son, had died at the age of two. She had sunk into a deep depression. For months afterward she had stayed in her room, crying for hours at a time. Robbie had held a special place in her heart. He had blue eyes like hers and he had loved her in such a deep and open manner. He had been a happy child, buoying her when her spirits flagged. The two of them were inseparable. Then one night Robbie simply died while he slept. Because he hadn’t known what else to do, Randall tolerated Emily’s depression for several months. He had finally had to push her out of the bedroom and back to her painting and charity work.

At first she was angry at Randall, but after a few weeks she was glad that he had forced her back into life. She began volunteering at the American school near the embassy. Being with children made her feel closer to Robbie. Soon she began to feel useful again.

She also volunteered at a nearby Indian school, and worked with the children as part of the embassy’s outreach program. Often, she would invite several of them over to the embassy for dinner. Then they would play in the back garden before they returned home with bags of homemade cookies.

It was during that time that Emily first heard about the monastery in Tibet. An American professor from Berkeley had stopped at the embassy to have his

visa processed. He had just returned from Tibet, and he was full of excitement and incredible tales. The embassy staff could not get enough of his stories. Randall and Emily invited him to dinner that evening, where he related more of his adventures. He described how the monks could control their heart rates and other functions of their autonomic nervous system at will. Some advanced lamas could even be buried underground for days at a time with no air and emerge alive. They could sit outside in freezing weather on a slab of ice wearing nothing but a loin cloth, remain warm, and melt the ice. They had great powers of telepathy, communicating by thought over long distances. They could leave their bodies at will and travel anywhere, bringing back accurate reports about what they had observed.

The professor kept mentioning one lama, a rinpoche, or senior teacher in particular, who had made a very deep impression on him. The rinpoche's name was Doezen. According to the professor, Doezen was a small man, unassuming in physical appearance, but with astounding gifts. He possessed tremendous healing power and could know everything about you with one glance. The longer you were with him the better you felt. This monk, the professor said, was wiser and more perceptive than anyone he had ever met.

Emily Chase was as charmed by the erudite, intelligent professor as the rest of the embassy staff had been. She felt he was speaking directly to her. By the time the dinner was over she knew she had to meet this Rinpoche as soon as possible.

Two months later she was on her way to Tibet. Her hopes and expectations were high. She was impatient and on edge to meet Doezen.

When she arrived at the monastery Emily was taken to his room. Doezen was immersed in his work, reading and answering correspondence. He nodded to her, acknowledging her presence, but kept on working for nearly two hours. She sat there in the hard chair, tired, cold and hungry. She kept waiting for him to talk to her but he said nothing, nor did he even glance at her. She thought him rude, insensitive, and self-centered. Certainly not a great man or even an impressive one. Then, when she was fully exasperated and on the verge of leaving, he laid aside his pen with great care and looked at her.

“You had a young son who died in his sleep recently.”

She was shocked. Speechless. He had stabbed her in her most vulnerable place while she was weak and agitated.

“You have experience much grieving,” he said, “But it is not finished. There is more.”

Emily's eyes opened wider. Her tight lips twisted into a grimace, baring her teeth. “Now you listen here,” she said. “You have no right....”

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But Doezen was not listening. Instead he walked directly to her and tapped her on the chest three times. With each tap, a strange electrical charge shot through her. Her head swam and she teetered on the edge of the chair. Before she knew it, grief flooded from her, more than she ever imagined her body could hold. Uncontrollable sobs wrenched her back in the chair. She was lost in a world of unfathomable anguish. Doezen stood nearby, his face full of compassion and tenderness, and let her cry. After a time, the wave of grief subsided, and she returned to her senses and opened her eyes. The kindest, most beautiful face she had ever seen gazed back at her. His dark eyes were suffused with the soft light of compassion. She never wanted to stop looking into them. They promised complete safety and peace.

“Grief will be your visitor for another three days,” he said. “Then it will depart. Please go to your room and rest. You need to sleep. You will release more of your pain in your dreams. I will look in on you later.”

Emily slept late the next morning, feeling lighter and freer than she had since Robbie’s death. She was sure she had wrung all the grief out of her system. She washed and ate a light breakfast. Doezen came to her room. He said little, but observed her with the great gentleness that was his trademark. This time he tapped her twice on the back of her lungs. That same electricity rushed through her, the same lightheadedness came over her, and she collapsed to the floor in tears.

She cried all day. Doezen never left her side. When the first wave of grief had subsided, she saw that a bright golden light pervaded the room. Much later that day, when she glanced again in Doezen’s direction, she couldn’t see him at all, only a brighter intensity of the same golden light. She wasn’t sure if she was still in her room or had been transported to some other realm; she didn’t know if she was imagining the golden light or really seeing it. By the end of the day she was so depleted of tears that she was sure there wasn’t another drop of water inside her.

By then it was early evening and dark outside. Doezen came up to her and touched her forehead. This time he kept his hand there. Her head filled with the same golden light she had seen earlier. The light slid through her body without resistance, flooding every organ, muscle, bone, and cell. She was deeply at peace. Her body seemed weightless, as if she were floating in space. She opened her eyes. She was looking down at her physical body lying on the bed with Doezen’s hand on her forehead. He looked up at her and smiled. She heard his voice in her head, “Come back to your body, little sister. Your soul is nearly healed. You will be fine. There is no need to be anywhere else but where you belong. Your home is your body. Come to it now.”

A second later she opened her eyes. Doezen looked at her intently.

“It has been a good day,” he said. “Rest now, little sister. You have done well.”

She fell into a dreamless sleep. When she awoke, light streamed into her room through cracks in the door and the window high above her bed. It was late the next morning. She stretched, feeling very light but exhausted. She lingered in her bed a while then went to the dining hall where she ate ravenously.

Doezen didn't come to her until the middle of the afternoon, so she had time to rest and think. But she couldn't think. Her mind kept wandering. She could not hold a single thought. When he finally came, he sat with her and said very little. Again, golden light filled the room. She began to feel stronger and more focused. Then he tapped her three times on the stomach. She doubled over in pain and started screaming and raging and thrashing about. Words that had never before passed her lips burst from deep inside her. She railed at God, her husband, the United States government and anyone else that came to mind. She found herself back in her childhood, a lost little girl screaming at her father for being so distant and unavailable, and at her mother for being so fearful and smothering. She screamed until she felt her vocal chords giving out, and then she shouted, “Damn it!” and screamed some more. When she had nothing left, she collapsed on her bed, soaked with sweat, and curled her body into the fetal position.

Doezen let her rest until her breathing normalized, then he came to the foot of the bed and placed his hands on the soles of her feet. A pleasant stream of energy flowed up her legs and settled in her lower belly, filling her womb with a deep sense of peace. Until that moment, she had had no idea how much anger and rage she had stored in her reproductive system.

“Good,” he said at last. Doezen released her feet after several minutes of silent concentration. “It is done.” His warm smile relaxed her. “If you hadn't released that anger you would have developed cancer later in life. Now the negative emotion in your system has been cleared. You are whole. You and your soul are one again.”

As he spoke to her, love and compassion again suffused his face and touched her in a place that no one had ever reached before. Not parents. Not lovers. Not her husband. Not even her children. Until Doezen, she hadn't known that place inside her. It had become cold and barren from lack of contact. Now it was bursting with life. Doezen shook his head slightly and said, “I am only the vehicle for you to find the Supreme Truth inside yourself. Everyone has that place inside them, but few ever find it.” He smiled at her. “You have good karma.”

Perhaps, she thought. But you are so much more than just a vehicle. This is the greatest miracle I have ever experienced. You didn't give me riches. You gave me wholeness and freedom. What compares with that? And all you had to do was look at me and touch me. Where does such power come from?

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Then he said something that cut her to the core and brought her back from her reflections. “Did you ever think your son might have died so you could be whole and free?”

“What?” she replied, shocked again. He seemed to throw her continually off balance. “God wouldn’t do such a thing.”

“The Supreme Truth had little to do with it,” he said. “You and your son made an agreement on the soul level before he came to this birth that he would die early. His death was to propel you, through the deep wounding it would cause, to seek your wholeness. Your son only needed two years to complete his learning here. His death was the vehicle for both you and him to evolve to another level of consciousness.”

Emily stared at Doezen. “That’s not possible,” she said. “You’re saying that my soul set all this up for my growth? I killed my son? How dare you? That’s crazy!”

Doezen remained calm. “Ah, little sister, it’s not. The soul lays its path where the mind cannot follow. This world is here for growth. On the soul level we all know that. But we forget it once we get here. Instead we think the world is here to fulfill our desires. We substitute self-aggrandizement for Self-realization and cause ourselves needless delay and suffering. The soul can use any experience to promote our growth. We come to our senses when the time is right. Tragedy and loss often open the door to consciousness. But each of us must choose to walk through.” Doezen smiled. “Or to remain asleep. If you grow, nothing is lost, only transformed. Your son died young. He chose that death to help you grow. Maybe he owed you a debt from another lifetime. Maybe you saved his life, and this is how he chose to repay you, sacrificing himself for your growth.”

“That’s a terrible thought. If he truly did that, I will feel awful and guilty forever.”

“If you choose to,” he said. “But to do so would be foolish. And wasteful of his gift to you. It was his choice and part of his growth. You had little to do with it. Because he accomplished his growth, his soul knows more joy. His choice led him into a more luminous state. He is free.”

Doezen’s voice grew gentle and compassionate, less the stern teacher, more the kind mentor. “It is time for you to move on as well, little sister. Remember, nothing is lost. You have not lost your son. He led you here and saved you. Someday you will be with him again. Ties of real love endure beyond the body, beyond death, forever. No purer love exists than that between a parent and a child. When you love your child unconditionally, you experience a glimmer of how much the Supreme Truth loves you. What is true and real here is also true and real there. When you meet again as souls, you may each decide to take on another body and play different roles in each other’s development. The love will be even deeper, the tie even stronger next time. You have each served the other.

How could it be any different? You must learn to see with your soul, little sister. Put the limits and doubts of the mind aside. The soul is bound to the Supreme Truth. The conscious mind is only tied to the body.”

“Do you really think I can get over Robbie’s death?”

“You are doing so right now. Your past no longer owns you. Your karma has been cleared. Guilt, pain, and grief are gone. We wouldn’t be having this conversation unless you were ready to look at the situation with new eyes instead of being stuck in old emotions.”

“I’m still feeling very emotional.”

“You still heard what I said. Your resistance was weak. My words reached inside you and struck a deep chord. They are now seeds that will flower in your soul when you are ready to take the next steps in your evolution. All will happen in the right time. That is what occurs when you find your center. Some day, your life will be about devotion and you will know a joy you can’t imagine now. But that will come later when your hair is no longer rich and dark but thin and white.”

“Thanks a lot. I’m not looking forward to being a little old lady.”

“How would you know? You haven’t gotten there yet. When you do, you will discover that while your body has aged, your soul has gotten younger and brighter. You won’t feel old.”

He turned his gaze full on her and looked in her eyes with the compassion and certainty that is the signature of a realized soul. Whatever tension and fight remaining in her drained away. She could not dispute his wisdom any longer and surrendered to the truth.

Emily returned to the monastery to study with Doezen two or three times a year for the next several years, until Randall was transferred back to the States. During that period she wrote Doezen at least once a month to tell him of her progress and ask him questions. He responded promptly, often sending her books.

Once she returned to the States, their contact gradually diminished. Emily had grown a great deal. She had become more centered and needed Doezen less. She returned to the life she had always known, living within the values of her class and culture. She painted, volunteered at the hospital, gave of her time to underprivileged children, and finished raising her two girls, who matriculated to prestigious universities on the east coast. After her husband’s retirement, they hiked and painted together in the Santa Monica mountains, and toured ancient ruins in France, Italy, Greece and Turkey. In the last years of Randall’s life they collaborated on his memoirs, which brought them closer together in a sweeter and gentler way than ever before.

When Randall died, Emily missed him dearly, but not despairingly. Their relationship had been whole and complete in itself. She had no regrets about

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things she might have said or done. She found that she could simultaneously miss him, love him, and go on. Something inside her was growing brighter after he died, and she was puzzled by it. She couldn't quite put her finger on it, or shake it off, and no one in her circle would understand it. So she put the feeling aside and continued to live the comfortable existence that she loved.

That was more than five years ago. Occasionally, when she slowed down a bit, the same feeling would come back. During those times she would climb the stairs to the third floor bedroom where Tenzin was now sleeping. She would sit among the books Doezen had sent her, reread his letters, and feel the brightness inside her growing. Sometimes her joy was so strong that she would cry. Other times, a feeling would come over her that her life was about to change drastically, so she would grow afraid. In those moments, Doezen's words would ring gently in her mind. "Little sister, everything will happen in its own time. Someday your life will be about service and devotion. But that comes later when your hair is thin and white."

Well, that part of it was certainly true, she thought ruefully. Then Doezen's letter had arrived. She had been worried about him ever since the Chinese invasion and had written him several times offering to get him out of Tibet. He had written back thanking her, insisting that his path was there. Whatever happened would be for the best. She was not to worry about him. However, he was sending her a special young man for her to assist on his path. Now Tenzin was here and the change she had felt coming had arrived. The love she was feeling for the young monk had amplified the brightness inside her. The two were intimately connected. Whatever was coming had a sense of inevitability to it. She decided not to fight the change, whatever it might entail, but cooperate with it, instead. The old life was over. It had been a wonderful life, rich in many things that mattered. A loving family, diverse experiences, world travel, excitement, pain, happiness and learning. She wouldn't change a moment of it. Now it was time to close that book and move forward. Something vastly different was being born inside her.

Very well, she thought. She let go of the final strands to the past. Everything happens in its own time. The moment had come for the next stage in her life.



CHAPTER 7

The Turning Point

THE NEXT DAY, Emily took Tenzin shopping. His robe was tattered. He had no other clothes to wear. She thought he'd protest wearing western style clothing and insist on keeping his robe. After all, it was all he had left of his life in Tibet. Tenzin, however, had already experienced people staring at him and whispering about him at the airport. He knew that adjusting to being in America would be easier for him if he blended in as much as possible. Besides, he was curious about western clothing. He wanted to see how it felt to wear jeans, t-shirts, shoes, socks and underwear. When they got home, Tenzin took off his worn robe and put on a pair of jeans, a yellow t-shirt, socks, and sneakers. Emily had his robe laundered and put away for safe keeping. It would hang unworn in the back of the closet for many years.

After lunch, Emily took Tenzin to the beach for a walk along the water. Tenzin had never been to the ocean. It totally captivated him. He loved the waves, the sea breeze caressing his skin, the feel of the wet sand as his feet sunk into it, the glistening dance of sunlight on the water, the play of light and shadow on the windows of the buildings behind him. Hope filled him and for the moment he forgot his sadness. He felt genuinely happy for the first time since leaving the monastery.

Emily saw how striking he looked in his yellow t-shirt, with his lean muscular body, bronze skin, and high cheekbones. His eyes shone with intelligence and gentleness. She was aware, too, of how the girls looked at him as they walked along the shore. He was exotic and strikingly handsome. Now rested, he projected a powerful charisma. She chuckled to herself. It's going to be very interesting to see just how deep this young man dives into Western culture. He's taken off his robe. Will he want a girlfriend? Young women certainly will be chasing him.

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For his part, Tenzin was oblivious to the attention he was generating. He focused on the ocean, the light, and the sand; his senses drank in each new experience. He kept speaking to Emily in Tibetan, telling her how incredible the ocean was, and that he had to come here often because the energy radiating from the sea gave him the same feeling of peace as the mountains at home. She had no idea what he was trying to tell her. She only knew what her eyes and heart told her: he was happy, and he loved the sea. It warmed her to see him in this light and get a glimpse of whom and what he really was. He didn't seem to need as much time to regain his energy and balance as most people in his situation might.

There's no sense in waiting, she thought. He's ready.

That evening Emily called Professor Kerr and arranged for Tenzin to start English lessons the following Monday. At 10 a.m. on Monday, she appeared at Professor Kerr's office at UCLA with Tenzin. Professor Kerr greeted them warmly, saying hello to Emily and asking her how Tenzin was adjusting to life in America. Then he turned to Tenzin and spoke to him in Tibetan. He told Tenzin an old Tibetan joke a lama had once told him. They both laughed. Seeing the rapport between them she knew it was time for her to leave.

That day the two of them spoke in Tibetan, and Tenzin gave Thomas some simple instructions in meditation. That's how they came to decide on their schedule. Every day at ten a.m., Monday through Friday, they would begin their sessions with a meditation then move on to the work at hand, mastering the English language.

After the first week Tenzin insisted in speaking only English with Emily. In that way, his time with Emily became part of his daily discipline for learning the language. Every evening after dinner they would speak English about all sorts of things. His capacity to understand and speak the language grew quickly. He had an obvious gift for language and could probably learn any tongue as quickly as he was learning English. Two weeks into the tutoring schedule, Professor Kerr told Emily that Tenzin was moving so fast that he would be proficient in English in half the time allotted, three months instead of six. She was not surprised.

During the third week of Tenzin's English lessons, Professor Kerr called Emily one afternoon and wondered if he might stop by that evening.

"Of course you can come by. We'd love to have you visit," she responded. "Why not come for dinner?"

After dinner, Thomas asked if they could meditate together. Emily nodded approvingly. The sense of brightness inside her had grown stronger since Tenzin's arrival and she was eager to meditate with him. Secretly, she hoped the energy would be the same as it had been when she meditated with Doezen thirty years

earlier. In those sessions her body had filled with light and her mind had become remarkably still. A peace had come over her that had left her feeling complete and at one with all that is. She was eager to recreate that experience with Tenzin.

They sat together in the downstairs study. Emily focused on her breath, inhaling deeply through her nose and exhaling slowly through her mouth. Soon she became peaceful; her body breathing itself. She observed the process without conflicting emotions or intrusive thoughts, only calm concentration on the breath. An intense sensation of heat built up at the base of her spine. At first, the heat was soothing and comfortable, confined to her hips. Before long, it began rising up her spine with increasing velocity, gathering at her neck like a pool filling with water. It soon surged into her head in a swift blast of brilliant light. The shock of so much energy exploding in her head made her mind go blank. She shook and trembled. The fire continued to flow like molten lava up her spine. A moment later she heard a sharp pop in her forehead and the reservoir of energy rushed out of her skull. A sequence of brilliant colors, white, silver, gold, green, blue, repeated itself until all the energy in her head had been released. Emily leaned back in her chair, exhausted and pale.

Tenzin was watching her carefully, observing everything. A moment later, she opened her eyes. Bright, golden light suffused the entire room. The light was brightest where Tenzin was sitting. Emily remembered the golden light she had seen around Doezen during their first encounter. No wonder she had thought of Tenzin as a younger version of Doezen when she met him at the airport. They had the same energy. Doezen's words flooded back to her. "Everything happens in its own time, little sister. Someday, when your hair is thin and white, you will enter the next stage of your path."

She had reached that point. The reality couldn't be more clear. A vast love for Doezen swelled in her heart. She understood then, perhaps for the first time, that everything he had done to her, he had done for her. His actions had sprung from a conscious, loving place in him. His gifts to her, however, had resided in an unconscious and unloving place through all these years. In healing her, he had redeemed and transformed her. That fact was becoming more and more apparent as she awoke to her destiny. The spiritual seeds he had planted decades ago were now bearing fruit.

Doezen's gifts, she thought, were the sacrifice that love makes to heal an unloving world. Love gives of itself to make others conscious, often suffering rebuke, misunderstanding, even hatred in return. Even now, Doezen continued to give. "I'm sending you someone special," he had written. "The best of our line." It was true.

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Tenzin looked into Emily's eyes. "Now you see," he said. He laughed so deeply his belly shook. His laughter proved infectious. Before they knew it they were all laughing.

When the laughter subsided, Tenzin continued. "Before I left the monastery, Doezen told me that your karmic blocks had been burned and that it was time for your kundalini to awaken because you weren't as involved in worldly concerns anymore. He said I would do that for you. I said to him, "Rinpoche, how will I do that?" He answered, "Just by being you."

"It's true, Tenzin," she said. "I am the proof."

"Doezen also said that I had many tools to help free people in the west. I'm not sure what he meant by that."

The professor had said nothing since the meditation ended. He was having an experience as well, but his was markedly different from Emily's. A wave of nausea had engulfed him midway through the meditation. Sweat still dripped down his face. Tenzin had noticed his discomfort earlier but had decided to let it build. He now reached over and tapped Thomas twice in the stomach. A bolt of electricity surged through him. He stared at Tenzin, his eyes wide and face frozen with shock. Unable to contain himself, he burst into tears.

"This is about your father," said Tenzin.

"He was a cruel son of a bitch," said Thomas. "He never loved me."

"You've carried that hurt your entire life. Time to release it. Feel your pain. Let it rise up from where it's buried in your body and then express it. There's no other way."

A wail rose from Thomas. He collapsed into the fetal position and sobbed for several minutes. When the tears had finally passed, he wiped his face.

"I've made an ass of myself and monopolized your time," he said hoarsely, his voice no more than a whisper. "I'm sorry."

"A moment of beauty requires no apology," said Tenzin. "There is no shame in releasing your pain, only grace. I am honored to be part of it. Tonight you freed yourself from the demons of your past and opened a door to a better future. Was that not your wish?"

"It was."

"When you face yourself and release what has bound you, you create space for a better future. You will be tired for a few days, then you will feel reborn."



CHAPTER 8

The Unexpected Guest

IN THE FOLLOWING weeks students and colleagues alike commented on the change in Thomas. He had more fun teaching, and his enthusiasm and humor were infectious. For several weeks he had been sharing with his classes the progress of the Tibetan monk he was tutoring. He had even told them about his mystical abilities. His students were enchanted by these tales and were begging to meet him. Tenzin was a living mystery to them, a keeper of ancient wisdom and holder of hidden power. He represented an unknown reality, not just dry words on an impersonal page or a story about the spiritual powers of some lama or yogi who had been dead for hundreds of years. He was here now in the flesh, and like them, he was young.

The demand had begun when an attractive young woman in his seminar, Alice Perry, asked what at the time seemed an innocent question, a thought shared by several other students.

“Professor Kerr,” she said. “You seem different, like a weight has been taken off you. Class dragged before, but it’s been great lately. We’ve had a blast. Every time I leave here, I have more energy than I know what to do with. It’s probably none of my business but, I mean, if you’re doing something that’s helped you, could you tell us because I think many of us might like to try it, too. Has that monk given you some secret power or something?”

“Yeah Professor, tell us,” the rest of the class chimed in.

Thomas pondered the question. How much could he safely tell them? Should he tell them anything at all? The question, innocent and forthright as it was, would not settle in his mind and sort itself out. So he looked out at the eager, honest faces in front of him and followed his heart. He told them everything.

Instead of the academic discussion about Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva he had planned for that day, Thomas recounted the transformational healing he had

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undergone with Tenzin and Emily. At the end of his confession the classroom became so still that you could hear the slight breeze whispering through the windows.

Their lack of reaction made Thomas nervous. He didn't know what to think. College students were not normally quiet. A few telltale beads of sweat formed on his forehead. He was worried about losing his standing with them, maybe even losing his job. Had he gone too far into the personal? Revealed too much? Alice finally broke the silence.

"Professor," she said. "We've got to meet this guy. You've got to bring him to class soon, like next week."

"Yeah! The sooner the better!" said someone else. The rest of the class eagerly embraced the idea.

Thomas' anxiety disappeared. He had done the right thing. Their excitement was contagious. He decided to ask Tenzin to come soon.

That night Thomas returned to Emily's for the first time since his healing. Now that he had come out of the dark side, he was eager to see them again. Emily greeted him at the door.

"Well, Professor," she said, happy to see him. "You look quite on top of things. I was getting worried and wanted to call you, but Tenzin wouldn't let me. He said you had to do this on your own, and you would get back to us when you were ready. I don't have much experience in these things, so I thought I'd better not meddle."

"You know, Emily," Thomas said. "Now that I think about it, Tenzin was correct. I had to go through it on my own. Now I understand the process. It will be easier the next time. I feel much better now."

"It's good to hear you say that, Thomas. It makes me feel better too. Not calling you went against my nature. But sometimes when you think you're doing good for someone you might be doing harm. I'm not used to taking anyone's orders, particularly in my own house, but this is an area where I don't possess much expertise."

"Don't apologize, Emily. I entirely understand. May I ask you a personal question?"

"As long as it's not about my love life," she said. "There's nothing much to report there anyway. When you get to be my age all the available men are in nursing homes."

Thomas laughed. "Not that kind of question."

"Then ask."

"When you went through your healing experience with Doezen, did you feel that you'd be exhausted and depressed forever? Because I sure did."

Alan Mesher

“That was such a long time ago. But yes, come to think of it, I did. I was drained, alone, terrified. Doezen was all I had and I hardly knew him. It was a scary time. But you know, when my energy came back, it came back stronger than ever. I felt filled with light. My life was really never the same again, although I did struggle for a long time to keep it as it had been. I did succeed in keeping the facade intact, but underneath I was changed, more whole and happy, and interested in different things. Since Randall died and Tenzin’s arrival that inner person has re-surfaced. I feel that I need to make up for lost time. I have no interest in resuming my old life.”

“My experience was a lot like yours. Where’s Tenzin hiding? I need to ask him something.”

“He’s not hiding. We’ll join him.”

Tenzin was in the study sitting among the shadows in deep meditation. A dim pole lamp in the corner cast a scant glow over the room. The scent of frankincense floated in the air.

Tenzin’s breathing was barely detectable. His spine was erect, feet and legs in the lotus posture, legs crossed, each foot resting on the inner thigh of the opposite leg. He was far away. Emily and Thomas felt it immediately. They sat down as quietly as they could, not wanting to disturb his meditation.

Their caution was hardly necessary. Tenzin was unaware of their presence. His soul was in Tibet, wandering through the pain of its people. He couldn’t find his family, but he did feel their absence. Danger and death were everywhere, in every corner of the country. He did not feel hopeful about his family, Doezen, or the others. He wanted desperately to enfold them in his arms and bring them to where it was safe, here in this house, with his friend Emily. But that was a wish no one could grant. The sense of oppression was crushing. He sighed and with a heavy sadness returned to his body, shuddering as he re-entered it.

TIBET 1950

Tenzin did not know then how correct his intuition had been. Two days before he and Nawang left the monastery, the Chinese had stormed into his parent’s village before dawn. They dragged the men and boys out of their beds. They ordered the village men to lace their fingers behind their heads, then marched them single file to the village center. An officer barked orders in a shrill voice. The soldiers forced the men and boys to their knees on the cold ground. Two soldiers walked down the line and ripped their shirts open down their backs. Boys cried out for their mothers. Men shivered. Some sobbed. Naljor maintained his dignity and remained still. He nodded to his

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young grandson kneeling beside him. The boy was shaking uncontrollably. He touched his grandchild's shoulder and smiled. The boy gained confidence from his grandfather's calm demeanor. He wiped his face on his sleeve and stopped crying. He did not want to lose face in front of his grandfather.

Each minute that passed seemed an eternity. Many of the men prostrated themselves on the ground and begged for their lives. The soldiers stood over them, laughing at their desperation to save their pathetic, worthless lives. A few of the villagers reached out and grasped the feet of the soldiers standing in front of them. The soldiers crushed their fingers under their boots. The men shrieked in pain. The commanding officer smirked at their stupidity and barked out his next order. The soldiers thrust their rifle butts into the backs of the prostrate men. The men twisted in their torment and screamed louder.

Another group of soldiers herded the women and girls to the village center to witness what was about to happen. The women huddled together, sobbing and screaming hysterically. Soldiers stood between them and their men, with bayonets pointed at their stomachs. The sun emerged from behind the mountains and slowly climbed above the horizon. Light gleamed on hard steel. The soldier's faces were cruel masks, their eyes devoid of all feeling. A woman tried to push her way through the soldiers. A rifle butt struck her in the mouth. She crumbled to the ground, blood spurting from a split lip and broken teeth. The rest of the women froze. The only sound heard in the village square was the panting of the men and the barking of the dogs.

The soldiers nodded at each other. They knew how to control this Tibetan scum. The women were nothing but stinking whores. Not a pretty one among them either. Raping them would be more work than pleasure. Not much of a reward for their troubles. Their only satisfaction would come from making them pay for their ugliness.

The lead officer shouted the execution order in rapid staccato. Two lieutenants came forward with drawn pistols. Tenzin's father whispered to his grandson to be brave; there would be another life and it would be better than this one. He saw his wife in the huddled mass of women. He smiled at her. She touched her heart, wiped away her tears, and smiled back.

Two soldiers walked down the line from opposite directions and fired a bullet into the back of each man's and boy's head. One by one they slumped over under the first light of the sun, eyes vacant, bodies heavy and inert, laying like stones on the hard earth. Their blood seeped silently into the parched ground beneath them.

A piercing lament rose from the women. The commander glared at them and snarled out another order. The soldiers set themselves on the women and girls.

They hit them in the face, battered them bloody, then ripped off their clothes and threw them on the ground. They held them down and raped them over and over again. The more the women fought the more the soldiers laughed. When they were done with their sport they pulled out their pistols and put bullets in their foreheads. Then they left.

When the sun was directly overhead, a little boy crawled out of his hiding place in the underground cellar under the sleeping mat where Tenzin's sister had hidden him. He waddled into the village center, found the battered body of his dead mother and sat down in the pool of blood seeping into the earth beside her. He tried to awaken her, pleaded with her to come back to him, first with his screams and then with his tears. He stroked her hair, held her hand with his short, stubby fingers and felt the warm, sticky blood on her back and neck. He was too young to know why she wouldn't answer him.

A grim finality hung over the village, a dense cloud of smoke and agony that all who journeyed there in the ensuing months would feel. The child's sobs rose among the dead and the silent, the final testament to the cold and ruthless murder of his clan.



Two days later, the Chinese marched across the field of stones and took possession of the monastery. The few senior monks who remained offered no opposition. The others had been sent away shortly after Tenzin and Nawang had departed. The Chinese wasted little time. The commanding officer barked out his orders once more. Soldiers rounded up the old monks, shoved them against the courtyard wall and spit in their faces. The monks remained calm and unafraid in the face of their executioners. A firing squad was formed. The soldiers raised their rifles. The captain gave the command. A volley rang out in the courtyard where shots had never been heard before. The monks fell where they stood, bullets through their hearts, the sacred stones beneath them running red. An acrid cloud of gun smoke filled the air above them. Buzzards circled high above the walls, waiting for the soldiers to finish their business and leave them to their feast.

The soldiers stood at attention, their faces cold and emotionless, rifles by their sides. Killing the innocent and the unarmed meant nothing to them. They had been trained not to think, but to follow orders. The captain walked up and down the line observing them with a hardened eye. He was pleased to see their programming was intact. His men were tools, robots, and nothing more. He felt as little for them as he did the people he had them murder. They would survive as long as they performed their function. Otherwise, they were expendable.

When he reached the end of the line, he shouted out his next order. The

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soldiers broke the formation and ransacked the monastery, looking for treasures. They found none. They took what little food remained, then piled the monk's bodies in the center of the courtyard, doused them with holy oil, and set them on fire. High above, the buzzards screamed indignantly. They would not have their feast this day. The soldiers poured more holy oil over the monastery and set it ablaze. Then they retreated to watch the flames destroy the ancient and sacred institution.

They raised their rifles above their heads and sang a song of triumph. Religion could never threaten Communism. Prayer was impotent in the face of force. Where was the stupid Tibetans' Almighty now? The idea of a Supreme Truth made them laugh. That night they camped nearby. When they left the next morning all that remained of the monastery were piles of charred brick and stone.

SANTA MONICA 1951

Tenzin opened his eyes slowly as he emerged from meditation. He took a moment to adjust to the dim light. Emily and Thomas were sitting with him, both in deep meditation. His new friends brought him joy. In the near darkness he could see their energy fields clearly. He smiled when he saw that Thomas's aura had expanded and become brighter since their last session. The blue was strong and clear, and the white beyond was pure. No more areas of darkness clouded his field. Thomas had transformed the energy that had clogged his stomach and throat since his childhood. The increase in his power was obvious. Almost anyone coming in contact with his electromagnetic field would experience an increase of energy in his own field.

Perhaps I can help more people in the way I helped Thomas, he thought. Maybe that's why I'm here. If I can do that, I will be doing what Doezen said I would do. Nothing would make me feel better, except knowing that my family is safe, Doezen and the others at the monastery are alive, and the Chinese have left Tibet.

Tenzin's thoughts arrived with a sadness and sense of finality that belied the hope he wanted desperately to feel.

Thomas and Emily emerged from their meditations moments later.

"Well, Thomas. Let me guess," said Tenzin. "You feel great and wherever you go people tell you they feel better."

"How did you know that?" asked Thomas.

"Your field has changed. Your light is much stronger now."

"That's good to know."

"There are those who think you can't change, that the way you are is the way

you will always be,” said Tenzin. “But emotional wounds can be healed. When they are, you reconnect with your soul and your true light shines through.”

“Emotional wounds are a universal problem,” said Thomas. “Not many people overcome them.”

“That doesn’t mean they can’t. You did.”

“Only because I had you. How many people can do what you do?”

“When you heal your wounds, your energy heals people who have similar wounds. Now those people will have you.”

“That’s already begun to happen,” said Thomas.

“You see? Healing is contagious.”

“But I certainly was tired before I felt better.”

“That’s to be expected,” said Tenzin. “When you release negative emotion you go through a cleansing period. During that period you’re often exhausted and depressed. But after that you experience an upswing of energy that is higher than what you felt before. Your highs become higher.” He smiled. “Your lows also become higher. This new energy becomes your new base level because you no longer have the weight of the past to drag you down.”

“Won’t meditation do the same thing?” asked Thomas.

“You’ve meditated before. Did you get the same result?”

“No. It felt great for a while but it didn’t last. The healing changed everything.”

“Meditation alleviates stress, quiets the mind and emotions, and opens the intuition,” said Tenzin. “But unless we clear our emotional blocks, the results of meditation are not as powerful or long lasting as they could be.”

“In the early years of the twentieth century,” Thomas said, “physicists bombarded an atom with energy. Three things happened. First, the electrons absorbed the excess energy. Then they went into a higher orbit and orbited at much greater speeds. Finally, when the electrons had spent the energy, they fell back into their normal orbits at their usual speed. Maybe meditation is like that. It takes you into a more centered space until you expend the energy you gained from the meditation, then you revert to the way you were.”

“Good analogy, Thomas. When you combine emotional healing with meditation, you have a proven way to quicken your evolution. Each process strengthens the other.”

“I’ve told my students about my healing experience with you. They’re anxious to meet you. They’ve been reading about lamas and yogis but you’re a living example and you’re their age. Would you come and talk to my classes?”

“I’m just a poor farm boy from a small village in Tibet. Your students are rich and educated. I have nothing to offer them.”

“I’m their teacher and I’m more educated than they are and look what you

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did for me. Presidents, politicians, millionaires , ph.d.'s and movie stars can't do what you do. I'm telling you, these kids are clamoring to meet you."

Tenzin grew quiet and thoughtful. "Exactly what did you tell them, Thomas?"

"I, uh, well. . . I sort of promised them that you would come," he confessed.

"You sort of promised them?"

"I'm sorry," stammered Thomas. "I should have asked you first. I'll tell them your schedule won't permit it."

Tenzin leaned back and smiled broadly. "Don't worry. I'll come."

When the day of Tenzin's talk arrived Thomas had a big problem. Word had spread quickly through the campus, especially among the co-ed population. There wasn't nearly enough seating to meet the demand. He was forced to move Tenzin's talk to a nearby auditorium. Even so, the auditorium was overflowing with students and faculty ahead of time. When Emily and Tenzin arrived the place was buzzing.

This is far too many people, thought Emily. He's not ready for this.

All the seats were taken. People were crowded along the back of the auditorium and along the side aisles. Tenzin had never been in front of a crowd before, let alone one of this size. Emily's first impulse was to grab him by the arm and drag him out of there. But she needn't have been concerned.

Tenzin wasn't worried. He seemed to be focused and happy. He was joking with Thomas and another professor. Well, if he's all right with all this, then I guess I'd better be, too. There were a few seats in the front row reserved for faculty members and her. She sat down in her seat and attempted to relax. She smiled and chatted with the professor seated next to her, but her stomach was tied in knots.

A few minutes later Thomas took the podium. He made a few introductory remarks about Tenzin and his experiences. Then he motioned for Tenzin to join him. Tenzin was beaming as he walked on stage and faced the audience. He scanned the audience for a moment before he spoke.

Emily felt a powerful current sweep through her. She looked up to see successive waves of golden light pouring out of Tenzin's hands. The auditorium glowed with light. The restive audience grew calm. All eyes were on Tenzin.

"At the heart of the universe there is only love," he began. "In the core of each person's soul there is only love. When we find that place inside us, we are whole and one with all that is. The discovery of that place of love inside us is the purpose of our life on earth. We are all here to transform and redeem ourselves. None of us has fully mastered love. Love is the language of Infinity. When we finally learn to speak it, The Supreme Truth becomes alive in this world. People everywhere will be at peace. Whether the Supreme Truth lives in this world or is shut out of it, is up to us. One thing is certain. The Supreme Truth won't enter our lives until we

love without judgment and without conditions. That's the law. The more we grow in love, the greater presence and power the Supreme Truth has in our lives and in this world. Don't blame the Supreme Truth when bad things happen. Become more loving. Bad things occur when people turn away from love."

He spoke about his parents and his village in the mountains of Tibet. He told them how his father had placed his hands on his mother's belly and prayed for a son who would one day become a lama. He spoke of his early longing for more consciousness. He spoke at length about the monastery and about Doezen. He shared several stories of Doezen's greatness, his spiritual gifts, and his courage. He revealed that he had no idea if Doezen or his parents were still alive. He didn't know if the monastery still stood or if his village still existed. But he had come to America because the man he revered above all others had told him his destiny was here.

Tenzin's words flowed like a clear spring from his heart. He spoke for nearly two hours. He concluded by saying that the choice confronting the modern world was either love or war, freedom or tyranny. The most important thing an individual could do for both his own well being and the future of the world was to heal his emotional wounds. To do so opened the door to the soul. A healed person was a window through which the infinite could enter the world. "Imagine," he concluded, "what the world would be if we were all consciously connected to the infinite?"

When he finished there was hardly a dry eye in the place. Some cried quietly, others sobbed.

He observed their emotional responses and said, "You are not crying for me. What I have shared with you has opened a place of universal compassion within you. From that place, you are crying for yourself and for the pain each of us must feel when tragedy and evil strikes some part of the human family. In that place, we are all one and we feel for each other. To be in that place is a healthy situation. To shed tears from that place is a gift. For some of you, your tears will release negative emotion and buried pain you didn't even know you had. Do not be afraid of it. It is a necessary and important step in your evolution. I am honored that so many of you have come. If anyone would like a private word, I will remain a while longer."

Tenzin was unprepared for what happened next. He thought most of the people would leave. He had spoken longer than expected. It was late. Yet no one left. Instead, they formed a line and came to him one by one. They hugged and thanked him. Many put their heads on his shoulder and cried. Some asked how they could work with him. Some kissed him on the cheek and said how much his words meant to them. Almost everybody said they would pray for his family, for Doezen, and for the monastery.

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Emily sat quietly taking it all in. The tension in her body had melted away shortly after Tenzin started to speak. Tenzin's talk had moved her as much as everyone else. She watched how the young women were drawn as if by a magnet to the love he emanated. Their eyes were wide with a combination of awe and need.

How many of these young women, she thought, are already in love with him? They see great strength combined with gentleness and sensitivity. Who else has that kind of balance? The only other person she had met like that was Doezen. What Doezen had been to her, Tenzin might be to them. They feel his power and want to absorb as much of it as possible. He has awakened needs in many of these young women that they didn't even know they had, and wouldn't have ever known, unless they had met someone with his consciousness. I remember when I was younger and Doezen woke up that part of me.

Good thing he was much older, she chuckled quietly to herself. Good thing I was older too. I was happily married and I had a family to ground me. I wanted to explore my spirituality, not to have a romance with the person who opened the door and showed me in. In that I was lucky. These young women are in a different place. They think it's Tenzin they want, but it's the power that flows through him that they really seek. They don't know it yet, but what they are looking for is an experience of their deeper nature. They want to feel their soul and to find God. To these girls though, Tenzin is God. Lord knows, if I were young I'd probably feel as they do. He's irresistible. I wonder if he'll want to have a relationship? One thing for sure, he is totally unaware of all the fuss he's stirring up inside these girls. He'll have his choice among them all, if he wants it.

Tenzin was talking with the last few people remaining. Thomas was on stage with other faculty members. The Professor was thrilled with their feedback. Both students and faculty alike had urged him to bring Tenzin back on a regular basis.

After everyone had gone, the three of them left the hall together, each lost in their own thoughts. Emily was bursting with pride over his success. Thomas was elated because he had risked his reputation and his gamble had paid off.

Tenzin was the least exuberant of the three. More spiritual power had flowed through him that evening than he could ever remember. His voice had done the talking and his body had channelled the energy, but he knew it had all come from a source higher than himself. In his mind, it was his rinpoche speaking through him, and his teacher's light that had flowed into the audience.

Two weeks later, Emily awoke from a deep sleep to a dark and silent room. She pulled the comforter over her shoulders, determined to go back to sleep, but a voice called her name. She knew that voice, though she couldn't immediately place it. Again the voice called her name, and she felt a slight touch on her right shoulder. She turned to see Doezen, his ageless presence all light and energy rather

than flesh and bone. A brilliant field of golden and white light extended around him. She felt herself immersed in his light. She was no longer grumpy and tired.

“Hello, Emily,” Doezen said. His voice spoke in her mind, not in her ears. “Thank you for caring for Tenzin.”

“It’s wonderful to see you.”

“I must tell you why I have come.”

A knot of fear formed in her stomach.

“The Chinese executed the senior monks and burned the monastery. We sent everyone else into exile before they arrived. Everyone from Tenzin’s village was killed.”

“Oh no,” she said. “Oh, Doezen. Our worst fears have come true!” The enormity of the tragedy hit her like a hard blow to the midsection. She instinctively drew her knees to her stomach and collapsed in tears.

“The world will be a bitter place without you, Doezen. It needs your light. But what of that poor young man? He has lost everything and everyone he ever loved. He has lost an entire life. What will become of him?”

“That is the reason I have come, Emily. You must grieve privately. No one is to know. Collect yourself. Soon a letter will come to inform Tenzin of what has happened. Pass through the shadows of your own grief before it arrives.”

“I’ll try,” she said, her voice cracking.

“Tenzin will need you, Emily. You are all he has now. From here, the path gets steeper, the road more difficult. Meditate when you feel overwhelmed, find your center, and let your soul nourish you. Whenever someone is prepared to advance in the Light the dark side tests him to see if he is ready. That time has come. For Tenzin. And for you.”

“Will you come back, Doezen?” she pleaded.

“I am with you more than you realize. Stay centered, little sister. See him through. There will be a brighter day at the end of this dark night.”

“But what of you, Doezen? Did you suffer?”

“I left my body before the Chinese shot us. My life was complete, my work finished. It was time. For now, I can do far more from this side than I could in the physical body.”

“Oh, Doezen, I am so sad and angry.”

“Don’t be. Those emotions serve no purpose. What’s done is done.”

“This is horrible beyond words. I am so worried for Tenzin.”

“You must find the strength to be the strength for others, Emily. Don’t drown in your own grief. Too much depends on you.”

She raised her arm to protest, but before she could answer he was gone, dissolving without a trace, leaving her alone in the darkness. The weight of her unspent grief hung in her throat like stale air in a stone tomb.