

# **Living this Moment in Purity**



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## **Preface: The Consciousness of Great Bliss and Luminosity**

Recently, the Buddha has repeatedly prompted my heart with three simple, yet profound statements:

`All happenings will become the past.`

`Every individual`s life will extinguish.`

`All existence, in a flash, will no longer exist.`

I have often meditated on these three statements, knowing that all forms of affliction in this samsaric world, whether physical or emotional, will eventually pass.

Every person who is born eventually dies. Throughout the ages, many heroic people have walked this earth. But where are they now? Indeed, each and every life will be extinguished.

The material objects we think we own are merely passed from hand to hand. Some will disappear; others will be given away. Why waste one`s heart and mind on the accumulation of money and material things? In a flash, all will be transmuted Into emptiness.

Every time I ponder these three statements, a tremor travels through my heart. Yet, at the same moment, I experience an exhilarating sense of liberation.

I have often recounted examples from China`s history, enumerating the successive dynasties from Xia, Shang, Zhou to Qin, Han, the Three Kingdoms, Jin, the Northern and Southern Dynasties, Sui, Tang, the Five Dynasties, Song, Yuan, Ming, and Qing. I cite these to illustrate the transience of all worldly phenomena.

As one dynasty succeeds and replaces the last,

One emperor replaces another;

One palace is replaced by the next,

As each ruling party replaces its predecessor.

Regardless of the event, it soon becomes the past. All will vanish like mist and smoke. All existence becomes non-existent. One may feel sad over such happenings but, after all, mourning brings no practical benefits amidst the torrents of time!

This brings to mind the following Zen tale:

One day, as a solitary traveler was walking through the woods, he encountered a bear. The animal began to chase him and, as the man fled in terror, he fell over the edge of a cliff. Luckily, before falling to his death, he was able to grab onto a large tree branch. When he looked down, however, he saw a hungry tiger encircling the base of the tree, waiting for him to descend. In the midst of his predicament, he noticed a plant of luscious strawberries growing near his branch. Above him lurked the bear, while the tiger awaited below.

Zen lineage gurus have taught us that this traveler, paying no attention to the bear above or the tiger below, need only reach out to eat the strawberries and enjoy their sweetness.

As the teaching goes, `The bear above is the past. The tiger below is the future, which is subject to change. Why not live in the present and enjoy the present moment of freedom?`

This story makes a great deal of sense to me. To really live, one must stop dwelling on the past or the future. The future is just a probability! It is premature to worry about events that have not yet occurred. Who can say whether an occurrence will ultimately be a blessing or a disaster? After all, a good person will be taken care of by the heavens. Why not just enjoy the strawberries now?

With a deep understanding of the Buddha`s supreme wisdom, I live totally in the moment, `the present moment of purity and liberation.`

The most valuable thing in life is prajna, supreme wisdom. While living in the present moment, we only need remember:

At this moment, do not commit any non-virtuous transgressions.

At this moment, be aware of karmic causes and consequences.

At this moment, be unbound by the cycles of transmigration.

In this way, one will definitely attain `the present moment of liberation.`

## Chapter 1: The Reason For Writing This Book

While sleeping one night, a colorful swirl of clouds and two youths holding Buddhist banners manifested before me in the spiritual realm. Bowing to me they spoke, `Living Buddha Lian-sheng, our master would like to invite you to visit him.`

`Who is your master?`

`Our master is Virtuous Light Buddha,` they replied.

My mind momentarily drew a blank. After all, among the three thousand Buddhas, many names were quite similar, and some Buddhas even had same names. So instead of inquiring further, I flew up to the auspicious clouds taking off with the two youths.

Soon we arrived at a land known as Green Flower Heavenly Grotto. Inside a great crystal hall, the Virtuous Light Buddha descended his throne to welcome me.

`Lian-sheng, how have you been?`

Puzzled, I still did not recognize this Virtuous Light Buddha. Seeing my bewildered reaction, Virtuous Light Buddha immediately understood my thoughts. He spoke with a smile, `Lian-sheng, you are looking at my Bliss Body now. Of course you won't recognize me. Take another look.`

A Buddha has three bodies: Dharma Body, Bliss Body, and Emanation Body.

The Dharma Body radiates boundless lights

The Bliss Body is Tathagata with the thirty-two majestic Buddha marks

The Emanation Body undergoes transformations among the many worlds

In my case, for example, my Dharma Body radiates boundless lights just like the great sun; my Bliss Body is Amitabha (Padmakumara); and the Emanation Body is Living Buddha Lian-sheng Sheng-yen Lu.

As I took a closer look, the face of Virtuous Light Buddha began to morph until I finally recognized him. `You are Lord Wen Chang of the Ci Ji Temple!` I declared.

I had met with Lord Wen Chang of Ci Ji Temple several times in the past. Though the two of us are quite familiar with one another, I had not learned of his new name, Virtuous Light Buddha, after his attainment of Buddhahood.

Virtuous Light Buddha then said to me, `In today world, people are becoming greedier and stronger in their cravings. Few are those who live simply with scant desires. Although civilization has made much progress, the presence of virtuous light is fast becoming extinct. I cannot help but feel sad, seeing how so many in the world will wind up in the three lower realms. I ventured to invite you here today to borrow your talents for the writing of a book. This book will be of great benefit to humans if it will wake them up so they will be more cautious and discipline their lust.`

I then asked, `What should the contents of this book be?`

Virtuous Light Buddha replied, `I will send you the material. Just go ahead and write it in your own way.`

`Who will bring it to me?`

`Lui`

I chatted with Virtuous Light Buddha a while longer while admiring the beautiful scenery of Green Flower Grotto Heaven. After sipping the wine he offered me, I finally bade farewell and left.

Not long afterward, I went to a Buddhist temple, Fo Qian Yuan, to offer incense.

The abbot approached me and asked, `Mister, would your last name happen to be Lu?`

`How did you know?`

`Last night in my dreams, Virtuous Light Buddha appeared and told me that when a Mr. Lu comes to offer incense today, I should give him this manuscript,` he stated, handing me a large envelope. Inside were worn pieces of parchment with handwritten script advising people to do good.

`Who was the writer?` I asked.

`I don't know.` The abbot explained, `When I first came to this temple to be the abbot, the manuscript had been here already. I flipped through it and thought it would be a waste to toss out, so I saved it. I was surprised when the Virtuous Light Buddha appeared and wanted me to hand it to you.` I knew I would not get anything more out of him.

Before leaving, I asked the abbot, 'What is your last name?'

'Lui'

And that is how this book came about.

## Chapter 2: Disasters of the Highest Degree

A renowned writer by the name of Xie Yun came to see me one day for a consultation. Knowing I have written over one hundred books, and that I never skip a day without writing, Xie Yun expressed admiration for my perseverance.

Xie Yun himself is a superbly talented writer who has written many outstanding expositions with brilliantly incisive and unique views. I also highly respect him. So when a writer of such stature sought me out, I was naturally very pleased.

‘Living Buddha Lian-sheng, I have heard that you can communicate with the world of the spirits. Is it true?’ he asked me.

‘To a certain degree.’

‘Can you ask something on my behalf?’

I laughed, ‘You are such a fine person with such international fame. Your philosophic theories demonstrate a supreme faculty of reasoning. Is there really any problem you cannot solve?’

Xie Yun said sternly, ‘What you say is true. In all my life, I never believed any of the superstitions about gods, ghosts, and the worlds of spirit, nor did I believe it possible to communicate with them. As for the books you have written, I used to sneer at them. But, this was the past. I hope you will forgive me.

I am sixty-four now, and looking back upon this life of mine, my talents and scholarship have definitely not been inferior to or weaker than anyone else 且. Yet, in the academic field, I have never held any important positions. In the field of public service, several opportunities have also passed me by. Although I may be a well-known writer, in reality, I am quite depressed. Throughout this life of mine, I have always been pushed out by others and unable to achieve my ambitions.’

‘Do such things happen to you?’ I was flabbergasted.

Xie Yun continued, ‘You look at me and see a famous writer. But the truth is, I have no money and no official title. My marriage is broken, and my family is gone. My health is also deteriorating. After these sixty-four years, I have only several old books to my credit. I repeatedly run into difficulties, as if an invisible hand has pushed all scholarly honor and official titles away from me. Can there really be such a thing as fate? Otherwise, why have I encountered such bad luck? Would you be able to ask for me?’

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All right,` I agreed.

Before Xie Yun, I closed my eyes and prayed silently to my three Personal Deities: Golden Mother of Jade Pond, Amitabha, and Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva.

`I have this individual, Xie Yun, before me now, who desires to learn of the karmic reasons behind his merits and demerits. Spiritual divinations, authentic channels to the subtle realm, please quickly bestow me with an answer. Disperse the web of bewilderment and fulfill our request to seek understanding. Jiji-rulu-ling.`

At that moment, a sparkling white light suddenly appeared before my eyes. Amid the white light appeared a large hole, and from the hole, a green robed youth emerged with a registry in hand. On the cover of the register, I noticed the name 鐳 ie Yun.

The green robed youth opened the register for me to read the contents, and after perusing through, I was greatly shocked.

According to this register, Xie Yun should have held an official rank. At a university, he was not merely to have attained tenure as a professor, but he should have become president of the university as well. Additionally, he was to have been employed as a government administrator. Right there in the register, were the listings of wealth, official rank, a happy family, good health, and a life span of eighty-nine years.

A loyal and honest man, Xie Yun is always filial to his parents and has never cheated anybody. What has happened to all these `predestined` merits of his?

As I continued reading, I came to the final page of the register. There, a small paragraph described an incident that occurred in Xie Yun 日 youth. On one occasion, he had wanted to earn some extra money from a publisher and for fun, hastily had written six slim volumes of pornography 鐳 ewd and explicit writings that were essentially all nonsense. It was the publication of these six pornographic novels that had whittled away all his merits in marriage, wealth, children, rank, health, and life span!

It was at this point that I completely understood.

I opened my eyes and asked, `What did you do when you were young?`

`I studied. I have always been first in my classes.`

`Did you write anything?`

`Yes, I contributed articles to newspapers and journals.`

`Any books?`

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No, not at that time.`

`I am sure you did,` I spoke with firmness.

`No, I had not,` he replied.

`What about several slim volumes of pornographic novels?` I asked candidly.

This time, Xie Yun 囧 mouth dropped open and his face turned red in astonishment and embarrassment.

`Oh! You found out! Yes, it is true.`

`Six volumes?`

`Yes, six of them.` Xie Yun nodded.

`These six volumes of pornography have whittled away all auspiciousness and cause for celebration in your life, resulting in one disaster after another. If it were not for the degree and nature of virtuous deeds accumulated in a previous life, you would not be alive today.`

Xie Yun was shocked, `How could those works have been so damaging?`

I responded, `Pornography causes one 囧 mind to become unbridled and lecherous. Such novels will encourage men and women who read them to act disgracefully and immorally.`

I quoted aloud,

Between heaven and earth, only birds and beasts mate promiscuously  
Without a sense of shame, embarrassment, or infamy.  
Humans, the crown of all creatures, should cherish a sense of shame and honor.  
By committing incest, a human is no better than the birds and beasts.  
Sexual misconduct is the primary demon and illness bringing degeneration.  
To seriously pursue spiritual cultivation,  
One must uproot all licentious desires.

I continued further, `Human beings are born out of sexual desires. At birth, everyone has within him the seed of sexual desire, which is why we have a particularly strong drive towards sex. According to the laws of karma, men are born out of sex and will therefore die from sex. Only when one understands this reasoning, will one exercise control and not over indulge one's desires. Restraining one's desires has many benefits including good health and long life, success and auspiciousness. Leading others down the path of sexual indulgence and degeneration, causing others to lose their chi, will result in the deterioration of one's own family and visits from the gods of misfortune. Instead of attaining one's wishes, one will get just the opposite.`

Xie Yun then asked, `What about marital sex between husband and wife?`

`Even with sex between a husband and wife, one should still not over-indulge. Practice restraint in all cases. Complete disregard of taboos will inevitably lead to diminished health and loss of life.`

`But my mistake has already been made,` Xie Yun lamented. `How can I amend the past?`

I replied, `As far as I know, karmic transgressions generated from the writing, painting, or creation of pornographic books, pictures, or sculptures, will disappear only when the works themselves vanish. Otherwise, the resulting karmic hindrances will always follow one around!`

Xie Yun was greatly shocked, `Can it really be this serious?`

`That's right,` I said. `If these six pornographic novels continue circulating, they will continue to influence all who read their contents. Think about it. How could the karmic hindrance created by these books ever be eliminated?`

`At the time, I had only written them rashly for money. It never crossed my mind that the works would give rise to such disasters of the highest degree. What should I do now?`

I told Xie Yun, `It looks like you have two methods. First, you can start writing books to warn people against sexual indulgence and misconduct. Secondly, whenever you come across pornographic books, burn them up.`

`That sounds like a good solution,` Xie Yun responded satisfactorily.

Some time later, I received a thank you letter from him in which he acknowledged the accuracy of my spiritual divination. He now believes in the existence of the spiritual realm and has taken up the practice of Buddhism. No longer does he dare make the claim that karma is mere superstition.

To confirm that my readings had been accurate, Xie Yun actually mailed me the six volumes of pornography in one set that he had still held on to for all these years. The books had been written under the pseudonym `Sex Stalk` and some of the titles are: Pleasure Amid Pleasures, The Happiness of Coupling, and The Wife of the Director?

When I was young, I remember visiting the street book peddlers at the night market on Liu He Er Road in Kaohsiung and seem to remember coming across these books. They have done quite a bit of damage to many young students.

As a sign of his repentance, Xie Yun requested that I burn the six pornographic books. I carried the task out for him.

Here is a poem in commemoration of this incident:

If a lecherous person does not awaken from his dreams,  
Dazed, befuddled, entrapped  
by indulgences and licentiousness,  
Sooner or later, disasters will descend.  
Remember,  
Form is emptiness,  
And true self-nature is luminous and perfect.

### Chapter 3: Heaven Knows

On one occasion a man by the name of Cui Jia sought me for a consultation. Cui Jia was handsome, tall, and very fit. He had come to seek information concerning his future.

Upon asking the gods in the spirit realm for guidance on his behalf, I received the answer: `Heaven knows.`

The response initially seemed a bit strange. Of course `heaven knows` but what did that have to do with Cui Jia's future? I asked my question a second time. Once again, the response given was, `Heaven knows.`

I made a third attempt to ask my question, and the response was the same. However, this time, I received the additional message, `Due to the merits accumulated from `heaven knows,` extra blessings will be bestowed upon this individual, and his fame, career, and prosperity will flourish. A bright and beautiful future awaits him.`

I then directed my next question towards Cui Jia, `Why do the gods keep replying with heaven knows?`

Cui Jia was taken aback. Blushing in embarrassment, he related the following story to me.

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In his college days, Cui Jia had rented a room in a residential home near his school. The landlady, a very beautiful and charming woman, was quite a flirt, and the young Cui Jia found himself rather enamored with her particularly her alluring eyes in which he also detected affection toward himself. The mere thought of her would send flutters through his heart.

One day, the landlord traveled out of town on a business trip. As Cui Jia happened to pass by the master bedroom, the door opened, and inside, the landlord's wife stood gazing seductively at Cui Jia with an inviting, flirtatious expression across her face. Cui Jia stood motionless as his eyes locked with hers. Heat rushed through his body, and he could hardly contain himself.

The young woman spoke, `No one will know.`

He was young and full of sexual desire. As Cui Jia took a step forward, his heart pounded with excitement.

She continued, `It's alright to have some fun once in a while. No one else knows but us.`

Suddenly, Cui Jia recalled a phrase he had learned in school as a child: `Heaven knows, earth knows, you know, and I know these are the four witnesses?` He stopped in his tracks and said to the young wife, `It may appear as though no one else knows, but heaven knows.`

The young woman then replied, `So what if heaven knows?`

Cui Jia responded, `Heaven knows, heaven knows, heaven knows!` He then turned his back on the young woman and quickly walked away.

That same night, she came to knock on Cui Jia's bedroom door. She was leaning against the wall right outside his room, and he could smell her perfume wafting in through the cracks of the doorframe. Several times, he almost unlocked his door, knowing perfectly well that as soon as he opened it, her warm, voluptuous body would fall into his embrace. `Why not open the door?` he asked himself. But the phrase heaven knows, heaven knows, heaven knows, persisted in his conscience.

Other people may not know, but heaven knows. Human beings may be deceived, but one cannot deceive the heavens.

Eventually his will power prevailed, and he never opened his door.

The next morning, Cui Jia hurriedly moved out of the building and moved in with another classmate. He did not dare mention the incident to anyone, and even to his closest friends, he gave the simple excuse that the house had merely been unsuitable for him.

So, as it turns out:

Indeed,

No one knows.

Yet Heaven knows.

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Cui Jia then proceeded to tell me of another strange incident.

During his college days, he had moved five different times. This particular event, which occurred after the incident with the young woman, took place while he was lodging at a boarding house for students.

One night while he was fast asleep, Cui Jia suddenly heard a voice in his dreams saying, `Heaven knows, get out of bed quickly. Heaven knows, get out of bed quickly. Heaven knows, get out of bed quickly.`

The voice had been very clear, and waking from his sleep, he jumped out of bed. Running to look outside his window, he saw flames and thick smoke billowing from the house next door. Immediately he woke the other students in the house and made an emergency call to report the fire before escaping.

By the time Cui Jia had run out of the house, the flames from next door had already spread to his residence. Soon even the house in which he had been living became completely engulfed in flames. Altogether, six two-story buildings burned down. Many were killed and injured in that fire, and there was a great loss of property and possessions.

As Cui Jia shuddered in terror, recalling this incident, he was reminded that had he not heard the words `heaven knows, get out of bed quickly,` he would have remained deep in sleep. He and his friends, trapped in the sea of fire, would likely have been burnt into charcoal corpses.

Prior to this event, Cui Jia did not believe in the world of spirits and held no religious beliefs. Afterwards, however, he no longer doubted the existence of gods in this universe. The alarm call, waking him from his sleep, obviously had been a warning message from heaven.

I spoke to Cui Jia, `Gods and spirits indeed occupy the invisible world around us. One may try to deceive others in a dark room, but the penetrating eyes of gods perceive everything.

Cui Jia responded, `Indeed, heaven knows.`

I said to him, `You should be commended for your high morals and will power.`

Cui Jia's face reddened and he said, `Oh, but it was just luck!`

`Good and evil I began

Cui Jia finished my sentence, `are only separated by a single thought.`

`A moment's error may become the regret of a lifetime.`

`When one repents, one may be at the end of one's life.`

I explained to Cui Jia, `In today world, with increasing interaction between men and women, relationships have become increasingly complicated. People no longer concern themselves with traditional principles governing relationships between the sexes. What differentiates humans from other animals is man's sense of ethics. Without morals and guiding values, men are no different from birds and beasts. In fact, there are actually people who have abandoned ethics, and they are worse off than the birds and beasts.`

`How should we maintain our vigilance?` Cui Jia asked.

I replied, `As the Forty-two Chapters Sutra says: regard all older women as your own mother or elder sisters, all younger women as your younger sisters or daughters. Developing this kind of view can help extinguish one's licentious thoughts.`

`What if one finds it difficult to maintain this view? Then, what should one do?`

`Learn to practice the `unclean view`. What remains of a beautiful woman once her outer skin and flesh are removed? All that remains is a skeleton. When the body is viewed anatomically, one sees internal organs filled with blood, feces, and urine reeking of an unclean and offensive stench. By engaging in this kind of view, one will find the body's physical characteristics quite horrible and disgusting.`

`What if one cannot perform this visualization?`

`As one's sexual urges begin to rage out of control, just stop and imagine the consequences. Taking that one step forward may very likely prevent future loss of wealth and reputation. Otherwise, not only might one bring shame to one's family and ancestors, one's infamy may spread among acquaintances, have adverse influences on one's children and grandchildren, and even destroy the career one has worked so hard to build up. Just thinking of these consequences is absolutely terrifying. This should cool down those surging sexual desires right away!`

`What if one still cannot restrain oneself. Then what happens?`

I could only respond, `A moment of pleasure will bring unending disaster and misfortune.`

`But so many people enjoy engaging in such pursuits of momentary happiness,` Cui Jia said. `Some would have no regrets even if they had to risk death!`

`The Buddha has taught: pleasure is emptiness, form is emptiness.`

`Generally though, people cannot see this through.`

My final response was, `One creates one's own blessings and disasters.`

In fact, our dialogue indeed addresses a serious issue facing many members of contemporary societies. Ultimately, these matters can only be decided by each individual depending on his or her conscience, moral character, and power of stability developed from spiritual cultivation. In the invisible world around us, gods and spirits do exist. You may think that no one else knows, but in reality, heaven knows and cannot be deceived. It is my wish that everyone will cherish their bodies and souls, preserve their purity, and engage in spiritual cultivation to transcend the sufferings of transmigration.

## Chapter 4: A Celestial Gathering

The fifth day of the fifth Lunar month, known as the Day of Earth Curing, is also the day the Lord Wu Di assembles gatherings to discuss and determine the conferring of government titles in the human world. On that day, many gods and deities convene in the heavens.

At the last assembly, I also attended the gathering. Now some may wonder, how did Living Buddha Lian-sheng Sheng-yen Lu manage to attend this event?

My reply is this:

I sleep among the immortal isles of Feng-lai,  
In a flash, my soul soars into the spiritual realm.  
Where I sit, brilliant lights blaze,  
Where I walk, thunderbolts roar.  
Transcending time and space,  
A School that validates the authentic Buddhadharmā,  
Dawn or dusk, east or west, ascending or descending,  
Interpenetrates all ten Dharma Realms.

The gathering could be described as `a meeting of ten-thousand gods.` Among those present were the Jade Emperor, the deity San Yuan San Guan, the Four Deva Kings, Great Lord of Five Peaks, Yama-king of Ten Halls, Great Lord Wen Chang, Lord Guan Sheng, Lord Xuan Tian, Lord Zi Wei, Mother of Constellation, the Moon Palace Five Lords, and the Dragon Kings of the Four Oceans.

Many Buddhas and Bodhisattvas also attended this gathering including Shakyamuni Buddha, Samantabhadra Bodhisattva, Kuan Yin Bodhisattva, Cundi Bodhisattva, Manjushri Bodhisattva, Golden Maize Buddha, Mahasthamaprapta Bodhisattva, Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva, Medicine Buddha, Amitabha, Flower Adornment Bodhisattva and many others.

At the assembly, many topics and motions were discussed. I was astonished, however, when one individual's name came up. Since it is inappropriate to disclose his name here, I will refer to him using the alias Cai Wang.

Cai Wang was the chief of a political party and also outstandingly wealthy. Lord Wu Di first mentioned Cai Wang stating, `Cai Wang should be elected chief.` The subordinates agreed seconding the motion.

But the Great Lord of East Peak then stood up and spoke, `I object.`

`What is your reason?' Lord Wu Di asked.

The Great Lord of East Peak replied, `Cai Wang has the wealth and ranking to merit votes, but he had just recently raped a young girl. This girl became pregnant and, with broken body and mind, jumped off a building committing suicide. Now full of resentment and grief, she has come under my domain.`

`Wow!` When I heard this, I was greatly shocked.

`Who then should be elected ?` Lord Wu Di asked.

`XXX will take his place,` answered the subordinates. (The last name of this person contains the pictogram `wood`.)

`What is going to happen to Cai Wang then?`

The Yama-king of Ten Halls answered, `Cai Wang has accumulated extraordinary credits from previous lives to merit the chief position. However, during this life, he has squandered many of these credits. Now, after committing this severe transgression, not only will the position of chief be removed and his wealth reduced, he will also be stricken with a vicious illness. It will not be long before he begins his transmigration through the six realms.`

The gods then conceded, `That is it, then.`

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In fact, during the great election, all the candidates personally visited, wrote, or telephoned me.

To each, my reply was, `I will give you blessing!`

Cai Wang even asked, `Will I win the election?`

My answer had been, `Put your utmost effort into doing good deeds and do not slack. Print more virtuous books and distribute them.`

`But the election date is approaching quickly. What should I do between now and then?`

`Repent for your sins and make a vow to the spiritual realm to be virtuous for the rest of your life.`

`But I haven't committed any sins,` he replied. `What is there to repent for?`

I was silent and did not dare retort.

After the election, indeed the person with the pictogram `wood` in his last name won the chief position and Cai Wang lost. Everyone had regarded Cai Wang as the frontrunner in the election, and all were surprised by the outcome. In this world, too many things turn out contrary to one's expectations!

Cai Wang lost his bid for the chief office and his wealth has also taken a dive. I had inquired the people around him about his health, but the initial reply I received was, `We don't know.` So I asked a second time, this time inquiring someone in the inner circle who replied, `Don't tell anyone, but he has come down with an incurable disease!`

`Oh! How transient are things of this world!` I sighed.

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I was worried for Cai Wang, because I know well that anyone who has committed transgressions of sexual misconduct will suffer the following retributions: deserved wealth will diminish, veneration and ranking will be taken away to be replaced by encounters with litigations and imprisonment, accidents, disasters, violent deaths, and other misfortunes.

I sought the Great Lord of East Peak and asked, `How can Cai Wang resolve his karmic retribution?`

The Great Lord replied, `It will be very difficult.`

`How difficult?`

`Amid the endless seas of karmic transgressions, hindrances of sexual desire are among the hardest to remove. The karmic bondage between Cai Wang and the young girl shall continue intertwining endlessly through the six realms of transmigration.`

`So they will be trapped with each other in vicious cycles of enmity?`

The Great Lord replied, `That is right.` And he continued, `The knot of karmic enmity has now been fastened between Cai Wang and this young girl. In her next life, she will definitely be born as his wife or daughter. And in the future, there will definitely be the scenario of husband killing wife, wife killing husband, father killing offspring, or offspring killing father. The karmic retribution is quite tragic!`

A deep sorrow pervaded my heart as I heard this.

The Great Lord said, `The scenarios may begin as loving relationships between husband and wife or father and daughter. But, in the end, their initial feelings will mean nothing to them.`

I asked the Great Lord, `I know it is difficult to untie such knots of karmic enmity and liberate oneself from the six realms of transmigration. But since it is possible, in what way can such a goal be accomplished?`

The Great Lord replied, `The only way is through spiritual cultivation.`

`How does one begin cultivation?`

`Repent, observe precepts, and enact the ten wholesome and virtuous deeds.`

`How then can one be liberated from the sufferings of transmigration?`

The Great Lord replied, `The mind is the Buddha, and the Buddha is the mind. This is the state where all concepts of self and other are obliterated, where the four ideas pertaining to the existence of a separate ego are absent, where the ten evils and eight improper practices are eradicated, where attachment to egotistic and possessive love is dissolved, and where lust, anger, and delusion do not arise. This also occurs when one diligently sits down to meditate four times a day and there is no slacking of discipline twenty-four hours a day. To escape the halls of the Yama-king, one must be in the constant company of Amitabha and Kuan Yin. This way, in a flash, one transcends the three realms of form, desire, and formlessness, and, in a thunderclap, emerges from the traps of transmigration.`

`What if one is entangled in the snares of a karmic enemy?`

`Develop through the dharma the patience to bear all external hardships and abide in the condition of the absolute.`

`How is this achieved?`

`Practice until one attains the reward at the stage of fruition where no lust, anger, and delusion arise!`

The Lord of East Peak also said to me, `Cai Wang is not the only person suffering this kind of karmic retribution. Cases such as his can be found anywhere, among all people. In the eyes of gods and Buddhas, people of the world are merely rolling and tossing about amid oceans of dust. In the future, you, Living Buddha Lian-sheng Sheng-yen Lu, will also be subjected to the same kinds of temptations where beautiful women will attempt to seduce and offer themselves to you. You must be very cautious.`

A pang of fear shot through my heart. `How should I handle such situations?`

`The Buddha teaches one to silently dismiss them.`

`They will make impertinent remarks about their treatment.`

`What is important is that you have a clear conscience!`

`What if people in the community misunderstand me?`

`Regard their reactions as a way to neutralize your karmic hindrance.`

`What if people of the world censure me?`

`Just don't let it affect you.`

`What kind of mind is this?`

`This is a mind developed through dharma to patiently bear all external hardships. It is a mind that abides in the condition of the absolute.`

After listening to the advice of the Lord of East Peak, I knew that my own ordeals would not be avoidable. I too, in the future, will encounter many such tests and challenges, enduring and suffering each interminable test, one by one.

When I face misunderstanding and reprimands from the whole world, I must understand that such happenings occur to help me neutralize my karmic retributions and also to help me develop an endurance to attain rewards in the fruition stage. Undergoing such ordeals, I will have no need to rebuke or reproach. I only need to silently bear them. Not even the slightest trace of anger or hatred will arise in me as I pulverize, in a flash, the myriad worlds of form into the state of Great Emptiness.

In the state of non-duality, there will be no self, no other, and no sentient beings. I truly am the Lotus Light Self-Mastery Buddha!

## Chapter 5: A Second Chance at Life

A man once asked me, during a spiritual consultation, how long he would have to live.

‘I never do readings to determine the length of one’s life,’ I replied. ‘This is an established rule that all who come for consultations know well.’

The visitor insisted, ‘Well, you don’t have to tell me exactly when I will die. Just tell me if I will live long.’

‘You will live long,’ I answered him.

The man left happily and upon returning home, shared news of his longevity with family, neighbors, relatives, and friends who all felt happy for him.

About two years later, at the age of forty-nine, this man, while standing outside his front door, began feeling dizzy and suddenly dropped dead! Family members rushed him to the hospital emergency room where doctors pronounced that he no longer exhibited any vital signs. So, the family brought the body home again to prepare for the funeral.

His son, Zhang Xing, angrily came to question me about my prior prediction. ‘You said my father would live long. Why is he now dead at forty-nine?’

‘But that is impossible!’ I replied, surprised.

‘What do you mean impossible! He is clearly dead now. You, Sheng-yen Lu, are a swindler. How dare you claim your spiritual divination to be the best? Your predictions are pure rubbish!’

I opened my mouth but was speechless, ‘This....’

‘Don’t give me this.... at all. You owe us a life.’

‘If I gave you my life, would I still be alive?’

‘I just want you to pay back my father’s life, nothing else.’ Zhang Xing’s voice quivered with wrath as he raised his fist in a gesture to punch me.

I said to him, ‘Will you allow me to make an investigation and get back to you about the cause of his premature death?’

`Give us a proper and acceptable answer,` Zhang Xing furiously replied. `Otherwise, our family will not let you go. I will call a press conference and tell everyone that you are a swindler!`

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I quieted my mind tuning into my spirit body, and maneuvered it out of my physical body.

The skill to traverse heaven and earth  
Is possible for a Bodhisattva  
Descending through the nine levels of heaven.  
Enveloped by blazing lights,  
A multitude of Dharma Protectors stand on each side.  
From the golden censor,  
Sandalwood smoke arises.  
A Dharma Body grounded in pure awareness,  
With the roar of a single thunderclap  
Vibrating through the three thousand worlds,  
Realizes nirvana beyond the three realms.

I began my search for Zhang Xing`s father and came upon him on the road to the netherworld. Two men dressed in green held him on either side, and as soon as Zhang Xing`s father saw me he called out desperately, `Sheng-yen Lu, help me! Sheng-yen Lu, help me!`

Blocking the two men dressed in green I asked, `This man`s life span has not yet been exhausted. Why are you taking him to the nether world?`

Noticing the three lights emanating from my body, the two men bowed respectfully. Then, one removed a bundled document from within his sleeve and handed it to me to inspect. Below the name of Zhang Xing`s father, many passages recorded the various fortunes of his life, and the life span indicated for him was indeed quite long. However, at the bottom, appeared the following notation: `On the XX day of the XX month in the year XXXX, a woman was raped by the man named above. This will result in a shortening of his life span. He will die at the age forty-nine.`

Reading those words, I was greatly shocked.

Turning to Zhang Xing`s father, I asked, `Is this true?`

`I committed the act out of a moment`s lust. I really do feel sorry now! Sheng-yen Lu, if you help me, I will definitely mend my ways and make a fresh start. I don`t want to go to the nether world. I promise to do more good deeds from now on. Please help me!`

My heart was moved, and I asked the two men dressed in green, 'Is there any hope of saving him?'

'No,' they replied shaking their heads. 'The decree was ordered that he must die. Unless this criminal here makes a vow to do good deeds and a deity notarizes the proper documents for him, there is no hope!'

'I will make the vow!' shouted Zhang Xing's father.

'Who will notarize the documents?' one man asked.

'Mister,' the other said, 'Your body is emanating the three lights of Buddha Light, Spiritual Light, and Golden Light. You can sign for him!'

The two men dressed in green took hold of Zhang Xing's father, turning him toward an expanse of ocean ahead. They told him to make the following vow: 'With the utmost effort, I shall abstain from all lusts and licentiousness, never deviating from this vow. If I deviate from this promise, disaster will descend upon me. From now on, I shall use my life to warn others against the harms of licentiousness. With utmost effort, I shall perform good deeds until the day I die, and I shall diligently cultivate the practice of Buddhism.'

I then placed a seal on the bundle of documents as notarization, and the two men in green pushed Zhang Xing's father into the ocean....

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Back at the house of Zhang Xing's father, the corpse had been lying motionless in bed. The heart had long stopped beating, the body temperature had dropped, the eyes had rolled up, and both legs had become extended and rigid.

The man had been dead for an entire day and was surrounded by his children, relatives, and friends. But, suddenly, his heart started beating, the area around his chest warmed, and sensation gradually began returning to his four limbs. His eyelids started twitching, and his fingers also began moving. Zhang Xing's father suddenly came to life again! As if awaking from a dream, he felt thirsty and asked for water. News of this man who had died and come back to life had caught the media's attention and was published in newspapers.

When Zhang Xing asked his father, 'What was it like when you died?', his father only replied, 'It was like a dream.'

'What did you dream of?'

Nothing,` his father refused to say anymore.

Although Zhang Xing`s father did not elaborate on his death experience, he did, from then on, warn all who crossed his path about the disastrous effects of sexual misconduct and licentiousness.

Some time afterward, Zhang Xing`s father came again to see me.

`Sheng-yen Lu, I have come to see you!`

`I knew you would come.`

`I want to thank you for saving me and also for helping me notarize the documents.`

`It was nothing,` I replied.

`I have come to take refuge in you and to learn more about Buddhism.`

`That is good.`

`Grand Master, please be seated.`

I sat on the meditation cushion as Zhang Xing`s father respectfully prostrated before me to take refuge. I said to him, `The triple refuge vows you now make are slightly different from those given by other Dharma masters in the world. Those given by other masters in the world are: refuge in the Buddha, refuge in the Dharma, and refuge in the sangha. They refer to the vows of not falling into the realms of hell, hungry ghosts, and transmigration respectively and represent the continual turning of the Dharma Wheel.

`Here, taking the triple refuge has greater implications. To take refuge in the Buddha is to eradicate the three poisons, to sweep away the six desires, and to constantly abide in pure thoughts and awareness. To take refuge in the Dharma means abstaining from immoral speech, abstaining from viewing immoral images, and committing any immoral acts. Be mindful. This is true refuge-taking in the Dharma. As for taking refuge in the sangha, one should abide in purity, transcending the three realms of Form, Desire, and Formlessness, in search of one`s Dharma Body. Understanding one`s true nature one`s past before birth, and one`s future after death understanding the path of entry and exit to and from life, and realization that the Dharma Body is timeless and undying is true refuge-taking in the sangha.`

Not until hearing this, did Zhang Xing's father truly understand the meaning of triple refuge-taking. `Grand Master, what you teach really is the truth. How can I thank you for accepting me as your student? In the future, where will you be? Grand Master, how can I always serve you?` he asked.

`Traveling from south to north, I shall roam freely and happily among the five continents. If one asks to where my body will return, it will always be meditating in the Heaven of Stillness above. Understand that you don't have to serve me to pay me back. By following the instructions of the triple refuge-taking, practicing diligently and observing the five precepts, you will be serving me and paying me back.`

Zhang Xing's father prostrated and paid homage before leaving.

I have heard that Zhang Xing's father printed many virtuous books such as `The Jade Almanac of Good Advice to World People,` `The High King Avalokitesvara Sutra,` and the `True Buddha Sutra` to donate freely to others. He sincerely and earnestly warned people against sexual misconduct and sexual indulgence. Later, Zhang Xing's father took the vows of renunciation and became a monk.

Occasionally, at the temple where he resided, some monks would bring up Sheng-yen Lu 目 name and begin insulting me. Zhang Xing's father remained silent, continually chanting the Buddha's epithet.

He had written and sent me the following verses:

Others are Buddhas,  
I am a Buddha.  
Others are Immortal,  
I am Immortal.  
Amid the torrents of red dust,  
All is pure and free.

Zhang Xing's father has seen the truth!

## Chapter 6: Defamation and Slander

The experiences I have encountered in this life are most unusual.

At the age of twenty-six, my soul journeyed to the Illusory Realm in the Greater Void, traveling to the heavens and the netherworlds. As a result of that experience during which I learned of my former existence and past, I wrote my first spiritual book, Encounter with the World of Spirits. This book has since garnered for me quite a reputation one that has been both positive and negative. As for the latter, the book has stirred continual assaults and unending slander against me.

Had my soul body never traveled to the Illusory Realm in the Greater Void, and had I not come out to help people and disseminate the Dharma, I would have remained a `surveying engineer` for the rest of my life. My whole life could then have been summarized by the following phrases:

A professional surveyor and Christian who loves to write -  
Married, had children,  
Died at an old age.

My life would definitely have been very pedestrian and not any different from the lives of most people in this world. No great storms would have raged, and I would have lived a mediocre, unambitious life, unaware of my past before birth and blind to the future that lies after death.

But, with the opening of my divine eyesight, I perceived the heavens and netherworlds, acquiring the psychic and spiritual abilities to probe into karmic causes and consequences. Spiritual teachers from the invisible realm have also come to teach me Taoist and Buddhist practices.

Attaining the great path of wu-wei,  
I realized Buddhahood and the realm of the Golden Immortal.  
The Dharma that transcends birth and death  
Is no ordinary Dharma.  
Can people without reverence hope to acquire it?  
It cannot be sold for a king`s ransom -  
Sincerity and devotion are the keys.  
Thus, the teaching will necessarily be  
Half open and half hidden,  
Left for later generations to decipher.

Since realizing the authentic Buddhahood, I have traveled throughout the ten Dharma realms and also come out publicly to teach the Buddhadharma to all. Such actions, in this world of roaring dust, have naturally invited slander and attempts to tarnish my name.

First came the article `A Critique on Sheng-yen Lu` published by the magazine Bodhi Tree. Then, someone with the penname `Wild Grass Mountain Man` published the two books Sheng-yen Lu Spreading Fallacies to Deceive People and Sheng-yen Lu the Demon Monster. Numerous other slandering and defaming articles published in newspapers, books, and magazines followed these. There have been so many, in fact, that it would be difficult to list them all here.

Eminent masters within the religious community also launched their criticisms and accusations. I have been called many names including: `the great mara`,`the great heretic`,`the devilish teacher`,`a great con man`,`a swindler scheming after money and sex`,`mentally ill`,`a hallucinating lunatic`,`an impostor`,`the demon of the religious community`,`etc....

Several years ago, two more booklets appeared with the goal of tarnishing my name. They were entitled: `Why I Left the True Buddha School` and `My Love, My Teacher.`

The amount of `defamation and slander` heaped upon me this lifetime has been so profuse and profound that I cannot help but feel honored. The majority of these insults have sprung from the relaying of increasingly distorted messages that were erroneous in the first place. And of course, good portions of the false accusations were deliberate fabrications. Some True Buddha School students also sought to hurt their own teacher because they were not achieving the gains they had wanted just as Devadetta and Judas had wanted to hurt Shakyamuni Buddha and Jesus Christ.

Ultimately, all these attacks have of course had no effect on me:

What else can I do when I have already offered my heart  
And people of the world do not recognize it?  
The Dharma vessel is about to embark,  
Yet those with affinity  
seem to be without affinity after all.  
Their eyes cannot recognize a True Buddha residing in the world.  
This makes transcendence and liberation difficult.  
I can only sigh.  
A missed opportunity may not come again.  
Where will I meet someone with true affinity?

I of course know that such `defamation and slander` cannot harm me<sup>9</sup> have the Buddha and the Tathagata in my heart. Firstly, all will become the past. Secondly, everything that is born will die. Thirdly, in a flash, all myriad worlds shall disappear.

I am an adept who has attained the Tao. Naturally free and liberated, none of these make any difference to me. In fact, such charges have only made me laugh out loud. How can they be so mistaken and fail to appreciate the truth?

I am the Maha Prajna Paramita.  
I am the Lotus Light Self-Mastery Buddha.  
I am the Inviolable, the Immovable.

As far as I am concerned, these defamation attempts merely help me eradicate accumulated karma!

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On the other hand, will `defamation and slander` create karmic retribution?

Here, I will recount an incident...

Out of the blue, an office worker by the name of Li Jin, an honest and prudent man with no seriously unhealthy habits, came down with an illness of `sudden fainting spells`. Whatever the time or place and without provocation, he would suddenly lose consciousness and pass out. After a few minutes passed, he would then wake up on his own and be fine.

Li Jin sought medical help, but after numerous examinations, the doctors found nothing abnormal. Because his illness resembled epilepsy, he was given epilepsy medication, but these did not cure him. According to a folk recipe, during an attack, an epileptic will awaken if allowed to sniff freshly cut grass. Li Jin, however, would wake up on his own whether or not grass was offered to him.

With his affliction, doctors warned him to avoid walking near oceans or cliffs. He would surely be finished if he had an attack and fell down a cliff or into the ocean.

Li Jin went to temples for consultation about his problem, and the answer he received was that he was being assaulted by noxious chi from spirits. Even after drinking water blessed by talismans, he did not get better. Li Jin then took refuge and became a Buddhist. But still, his illness did not go away. He felt he had exhausted all his options and tried almost everything there was to try.

Then someone `recommended Living Buddha Lian-sheng Sheng-yen Lu` to him. Li Jin started seriously searching for me and some time later, we finally met.

During his consultation, I quieted my mind and meditated. Upon opening my eyes, I said to him, `You have committed false speech!`

`But I have always been an honest man and never told any lies,` Li Jin replied. His family also confirmed that he was a law-abiding, honest man.

I asked him, `Do you remember a lady by the name of Wang Zi?`

`Wang Zi?' he asked. Li Jin thought for a long time but was clueless.

His family also tried to recall whether there was an acquaintance by such a name. Finally, after long contemplation, they vaguely recalled a woman by that name who had been one of their neighbors about ten years prior.

`What has become of this lady?' Li Jin inquired.

`She was looking for you,' I answered.

`For me? Why?' Li Jin asked astonished.

For a few moments, Li Jin's family remained very quiet. Then they spoke up and told me that Wang Zi had been an old spinster who lived alone. One time, a group of neighbors at a gathering were joking around, and someone brought up Wang Zi's name, discussing that she had never been able to get married and was probably still a virgin. People started making fun of her.

One person remarked, `Wang Zi does not know what relationships are about.`

Another said, `She's too old-fashioned and inflexible.`

Someone else said, `Maybe Wang Zi is preserving her chastity for someone and refuses to marry.`

And another commented, `Wang Zi is always so stern and proper.`

Then Li Jin interjected, `According to a physiognomy book that teaches one how to read people, the manner in which Wang Zi walks shows she's not a virgin.`

This one statement of his passed from mouth to mouth, finally reaching Wang Zi's ears in an even more offensive form. People liked to distort and add superfluous comments as they gossiped.

Wang Zi had wanted to straighten the facts and speak up on her own behalf, but she found the topic hard to discuss. And because she was unable to talk about the situation with anyone, an unbearable anger began to seethe inside her. She slowly sank into a deep depression that eventually led to her death.

Wang Zi's passing caused little stir, as she had just been an unknown, insignificant woman in the eyes of her neighbors. Typically when someone dies, all rumors about the person slowly dissipate. As for Li Jin, it never even occurred to him that his casual remark would lead to Wang Zi's death. According to him, his comment had been purely unintentional and was not meant to hurt her at all.

Over the past ten years, Li Jin moved around several times, and the incident with Wang Zi had completely faded from his memory.

Yet, that day, I, Living Buddha Lian-sheng Sheng-yen Lu, saw a woman standing behind Li Jin. This woman was Wang Zi.

‘What does she want from me?’ Li Jin asked. ‘I didn’t kill her, did I?’

‘You did not, but your frivolous remark was the cause of her death.’

‘But I had just been quoting something I read!’ he protested.

‘Conjectures that may ruin or defame someone’s reputation or character should be avoided,’ I remarked.

‘Then everyone, including television and newspaper articles, has made conjectures and thus, false speech!’ Li Jin felt that nothing was wrong with freedom of speech.

I said with a sigh, ‘You are right in saying that today’s television, newspapers, and magazines rarely function as sources to promote good values benefiting citizens of a society. They concentrate on reporting sensational crimes such as rape, murder, and robbery and scramble for accusatory reports that are scandalous in nature. Often times, before facts are verified, reporters have already made their judgments. These are violations frequently made by today’s media. In litigation reports, denigration of a party involved, without actual fact-finding, is sabotage on an individual’s reputation and character. This is also a transgression of false speech.’

‘That is the way the media is. I am just doing what they are doing.’ Li Jin remained unconvinced.

‘Just think, after you made your remark, how could she go on with her life?’

Li Jin was silent and refused to address my question, so his family then asked, ‘What can be done now?’

I turned to the invisible Wang Zi, ‘What should he do to settle this situation?’

Wang Zi replied, ‘After I died, I became a homeless ghost. Luckily the stove god took me in, and I am currently living in the fire in his kitchen. I do not want to take his life, because that will only create vicious cycles of unending enmity and suffering throughout future lives.’

However, the kitchen god told me of something Li Jin can do to help me attain a quicker rebirth into a better realm. Every morning after rising from bed, he must face the stove and prostrate nine times. Then he should chant `Namo Amitabha Buddha` ten times and dedicate the merits to me.`

`How long should he chant and prostrate?`

`Ten years. When I obtain my rebirth, he will be all right.`

`

He will have to wait ten years before his affliction will go away?` I asked shocked.

Wang Zi answered, `No. As long as Li Jin starts bowing nine times and chants the Buddha epithet ten times every day, the dizzy spells will go away. I won't bother him anymore.`

I related this conversation to Li Jin. His family decided that the request was reasonable and something rather simple that could be easily carried out. At least they would not have to engage in any special meritorious deeds to resolve this disaster. It would not require them to spend huge amounts of money, burn spirit money, or secure monks or priests to perform bardo services. Neither had they been asked to enshrine a statue for Wang Zi or make contributions to the building of temples.

Li Jin on the other hand, though he did not object to the request, did not embrace it wholeheartedly either.

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The outcome, however, was surprising.

Li Jin's `sudden fainting spells`, which used to strike regularly every two to three days, and sometimes even two to three times in one day, suddenly stopped. Ever since he started his morning ritual prostrations to the kitchen fire while chanting `Namo Amitabha Buddha` ten times, the fainting spells disappeared. For an entire week, he did not suffer a single bout.

But Li Jin was still unconvinced. He deliberately missed a day, skipping the chanting and prostrating, and that afternoon he immediately suffered two `sudden fainting spells.` He could not disbelieve now. He resumed the ritual on a daily basis, and indeed, from then on, the `sudden fainting spells` vanished without relapse.

There was one more strange incident that helped convince Li Jin. His four-year-old daughter one day said that she actually saw a woman sitting right above the stove fire in the kitchen. The woman was chanting the name of the Buddha with both palms joined. The family asked her to describe the woman, and she said the woman was not evil looking. She smiled a lot and even waved to her. The clothing worn by the woman fit the description of Wang Zi's.

After witnessing these events involving the spirit world, Li Jin's family, relatives, and friends now all believe in the existence of gods and ghosts. They recognize the existence of karma and accept that invisible laws indeed govern human existence.

Here, I would like to offer some advice to people of the world:

Among the five Buddhist precepts is the prohibition against false speech. This is a precept that is easily violated because humans tend to neglect its seriousness and often parrot what others say. As spiritual cultivators, it is best to remain silent regarding things we do not know, especially those pertaining to the defamation of reputation and character. In general, people like to gossip about the rights and wrongs of others behind their backs. This is also not right. Make one less remark, and instead chant the Buddha 卐 epithet once!

The media may be used as a murder weapon or as an instrument to rouse public opinion. Gossip can be a terrifying thing! If a report is not based in facts, then a karmic transgression is created!

## Chapter 7: Between Wife and Mistress

One hot afternoon, a man about fifty years of age came to me for a consultation. After commenting several times on the heat, the man asked for a glass of cold water.

Unhurriedly, I went to fetch some water and brought back three glasses, two large and one small. As I placed a large glass of water in front of my guest and set the remaining two glasses on the side, the man asked, `Why have you brought these other two glasses? One glass is fine for me.`

I smiled and responded, `Although you think you have come alone, you have in your company an adult and a small child. Do you expect me to just offer you water while ignoring them?`

A look of terror swept across his face and his complexion turned green, `Who are they?`

`A mother and her daughter,` I replied.

`Can you get rid of them?`

`I can give it a try, but I won't be able to make them go away right this instant.`

The man then said, `That is why I have come here today. I hope you can solve this mystery for me.`

This man's name is Wang Deng. He is a famous businessman whose name appears often in business magazines and whose companies are well-known, not only in Taiwan but also around the world. Wang Deng has amassed great personal wealth, fame, and business success, and he also has the enviable demeanor of a gentleman. As a result, numerous women, including his own secretary, persistently make advances toward him.

Wang Deng is already married and has children. His family life is quite perfect and, although his business comes first to him, he takes good care of his family and pays great attention to his children's education. In many ways, as he himself is well aware, he has everything.

This is Wang Deng's philosophy regarding extra-marital affairs:

`It is heaven's mandate that a man or woman should only bed his or her married spouse. If this order is disrupted, the ties of friendship will also be affected; and from that point on, ensuing confusion and conflict will leave one not too far from the ways of the birds and the beasts.

No matter how cautiously one hides affairs, there will be a day when scandals will break out. When this happens, one's reputation will be completely destroyed.`

Wang Deng, therefore, has always been very careful.

On one occasion, however, Wang Deng had to travel quite far to attend a conference, and during this trip, a young woman had been assigned to wait upon him.

As soon as he placed his eyes on this woman, he was taken aback. This woman looked exactly like his first love.

Upon mentioning the resemblance to this lady, she coyly replied, `I wish I were her.` Wang Deng learned from her name tag that her name was Yang Qin.

During the several days of the conference, Yang Qin was very meticulous and took very good care of Wang Deng.

Wang Deng could not help but feel a special fondness for her and, upon praising her excellent service one evening, Yang Qin replied, `As long as it makes you happy, I'll do anything for you.`

As she spoke, these words sent Wang Deng's heart and mind spinning. Yan Qin's beautiful figure, Yang Qin's smile, Yang Qin's youth, her freshness, her delicate features-none of these could be found in his wife.

As humans, we are born out of sexual desires, and the habitual tendencies of lust and sexual yearnings are particularly strong in us. Wang Deng is not a wooden man. Previously, his desires had been restrained by reason and morals. Yet one night, when Yang Qin visited Wang Deng at his hotel under the pretext of delivering an urgent document to him, they overstepped these bounds.

In one careless moment, Wang Deng abandoned his restraint and fell into an abyss of suffering.

Unfortunately, from this one moment of happiness sprung an eternal grief. Yang Qin became pregnant and gave birth to a daughter.

Attempts to contain fire with paper are futile for fire will undoubtedly break loose.

Regarding Yang Qin:

How can a lady endure such  
loss of virtue and reputation  
in the eyes of family and friends,  
without incurring karmic enmity?

As for the wife:

Who does not long to have a husband until old age?  
Sadness descends to the sleeping chamber where one is alone;  
As lovebirds in the fragrant pond separate,  
Hope for flying together disappears;  
With all hope ruptured,  
What remains to brighten one`s day?  
Such savage trickery and assault  
Eventually lead to karmic enmity.

In this world, many wars are fought among women. There are battles fought between mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law, between wives and mistresses, amongst sisters-in-laws, etc.. From ancient times up to the present, numerous case histories of ferocious battles exist.

Well-known battles within the royal court, such as those fought by Empress Wu Ze Tian, Empress Lu, and the Dowager Empress, have employed vicious schemes against the enemy, spreading fear to all who read about their treacherous acts. The driving force behind these battles, as is well known, was the desire `to possess` someone exclusively. Toleration for a competitor was impossible.

Women are meticulous creatures and, when it comes to fighting over an object of desire, they are a notch above men. Even nuns, to my knowledge, are no exception. In order to gain favoritism from their master, several Buddhist nuns who were attendants to a contemporary eminent monk, engaged in battles amongst themselves. In the end, jealousy drove the losing party to seek ways to kill her own master!

When a woman`s love is transformed into hatred, a terrible power is generated from such an eruption of anger, where one seeks to destroy everything rather than allow the other party victory. Of course I cannot blame this solely on women. The fact is, Wang Deng was also wrong. Once committed, transgressions are not easily rectified or erased from memory.

In this situation, Wang Deng`s wife refused to tolerate her husband`s `mistress.`

Yang Qin initially did her best to endure the situation, but when her tolerance reached its limit, she also started to take her frustrations out on Wang Deng. Both wife and mistress decided they would not accept the existence of the other.

One may well imagine the ensuing pain Wang Deng had to suffer.

There is a Chinese saying that `indulging in women` brings about disaster, as if the female sex is to be blamed. However, careful analysis reveals that men actually bring disasters upon themselves. All these afflictions arise out of `lust.` Lust between the sexes has led to many tragic disasters, ranging from the loss of individual life to the loss of an entire country. Unfortunately, people continue engaging in such games of lust. Some are even willing to sacrifice themselves without remorse, as demonstrated by this well-known Chinese saying: `It is noble to die for a woman and become an amorous ghost.`

In today`s world, many people heartily search for sexual outlets without regard for principles or morals. Cases of adultery, and even incest, abound. Such disturbances are not limited to relationships between men and women, of course, but include same-sex affairs.

Deaths brought on by sexual indulgence are also numerous. Think of some of the cases read or heard in the news: `Adulterous wife kills husband,` `Adulterous husband kills wife,` `Husband kills wife`s lover,` `Wife`s lover kills husband,` `Wife kills mistress,` `Mistress kills wife,` etc..

According to statistics, forty percent of homicides and suicides can be attributed directly to love and sex, while another forty percent can be attributed indirectly to such crimes of passion. The rate is quite high.

Over-indulgence in sex can also cause an individual to lose one`s vital energies, resulting thus in premature death. Because the cause of this kind of death is not readily detectable, such deaths are usually considered `natural deaths.`

I have in the past written these verses:

Around her waist,  
The beauty carries a double-edged sword,  
Which chops not the holy but the ordinary lot;  
One may not appear to have been decapitated,  
But secretly the bone marrow prematurely dries up.

Ordinary people may regard sexual experiences as one of life`s most enjoyable activities. But, in the eyes of spiritual cultivators, such encounters are great disasters.

When ordinary people indulge in sex, they invite disaster. Sages of high virtue see through the entrapment of sex and attain the greatest bliss and serenity through spiritual cultivation. Consider the following:

- 1) Frustration is generated when one is unable to obtain the object of one`s sexual desire.
- 2) Boredom and restlessness are generated after one`s sexual desires are met and the intensity gradually fades.
- 3) Resentment and despair are generated after the object of one`s sexual desire is attained and later lost.

Whatever the scenario, the affairs of sexual indulgences are associated with numerous crises and misfortunes.

The extra-marital affair between Wang Deng and Yang Qin brought on struggles between the wife and mistress. At first, Wang Deng tried to take care of Yang Qin, but he was being worn out by the battles and became tired. Gradually, he began to lose his patience, though he realized it was his own transgression that had initiated this series of painful events upon his originally peaceful family.

As each day passed, Yang Qin`s resentment escalated. Then one day, in a moment of desperation, she jumped into a river with her toddler, committing suicide and killing her daughter as well. What a tragedy to result from such an extra-marital affair!

After the suicide, Wang Deng would often wake in alarm in the middle of his sleep. During such occasions, his entire body felt cold, fearful, and he could not go back to sleep. In the dark, he seemed to see the image of Yang Qin holding his daughter`s hand and gazing upon him.

Then strange events started happening:

Wang Deng could often feel the presence of Yang Qin around him. In the middle of the night, the floor creaked as if people were walking around. Chairs started moving. Doors closed on their own. Strange noises came from the walls. Wang Deng would occasionally hear the patter of a child`s feet. However, even more frightening were the times when gas stoves would be found turned on after they had obviously been shut off.

Strangest of all, however, was that Wang Deng, who could no longer sleep well and often felt soreness in all his joints, would wake up to find his entire body, including the face and neck areas, covered with bruises! It appeared as if he had been terribly beaten by someone.

When Wang Deng went to a temple to seek answers from the gods, the reply he received was that he had been `beaten by a ghost.` He procured talismans of the Five Heavenly Lords and pasted them on doors and windows all over his house. Yet his face remained blue and swollen.

Next, he invited a psychic medium who channelled the Five Heavenly Lords over to his house to perform a ritual. The sedan representing the deities circumscribed the house once. Then, the medium brandished a shark-bone sword, cutting his own body until he bled all over, all the while drawing talismans and chanting incantations. Everything was tried to no avail.

After Wang Deng recounted the above happenings to me, he unbuttoned his shirt to show me his chest and back. Indeed, there were large, discolored patches all over his skin. Some were reddish, some bluish, similar to the kinds of marks left after heated canisters are applied to the skin (a relatively popular folk therapy used by some people). It was an appalling sight.

‘Have you been checked by a doctor?’ I asked.

‘Of course, but the doctors couldn’t figure out what could have caused these bruises. I even went to ask the temple for help. The gods said they were ghost beatings, but the rituals they performed didn’t help either. That is why I have come to see you today. I hope you can solve this mystery for me.’

I turned around to ask the invisible Yang Qin, ‘How about a reconciliation?’

Yang Qin answered, ‘No compensation will undo the resentment and grief I harbored when I died.’

I tried to explain to her the futility of clinging onto hatred and the perpetuation of cycles of suffering that occur when one is unable to let go of the

past. In one lifetime, one kills the other. In the next, the other kills one. When will it end then?

Yang Qin then asked, ‘Wang Deng’s wife is full of jealousy, hatred, and viciousness toward me. Why does she not suffer any retribution?’

I was unable to answer her.

She then said, ‘I feel great injustice for what has happened to me. Before my resentment can be allayed, I want to see both of them suffer their retribution.’

I then suggested to her, ‘What if I used my magical power to make you leave?’

‘It won’t work. I have sanction from this decree,’ Yang Qing retorted waving a small black flag before me. The small flag actually turned out to be a decree obtained from the hells in the netherworld. No wonder even the Five Heavenly Lords were unable to resolve the situation.

‘What if I perform a deliverance to help you attain a rebirth?’

‘I don’t want to leave,’ Yang Qin stated with curt finality.

‘What if I have a decree from the Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva?’

Yang Qin replied, ‘How can that be possible?’

‘I can order the Wheel-revolving Ruler to restrain you and send you back into the six realms of transmigration. I don’t want you and your daughter remaining in the human world to continue your scare tactics. You will also incur retribution by doing such things. You must realize that you have yourself to blame for not controlling your own lust and desires. You cannot merely place all the blame on Wang Deng and his wife. Think it over.’

I presented the decree from Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva. This decree is:

A banner that reaches from heaven to earth,

Brings great deliverance to sentient beings,

Radiating five thousand brilliant colorful rays.

Homage to the great protective grace of Ksitigarbha.

As soon I produced this banner, a jeweled canopy with banners appeared in the sky, emanating brilliant rays of lights. Beneath this canopy, Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva majestically sat upon a rainbow-colored lotus before three golden lights. Resplendent jeweled ornaments emitted lights enveloping the Bodhisattva.

Ksitigarbha held a golden lotus seat in his hand as he spoke,

Golden lotus seat,

Full of compassion

For humans in the world,

Radiate light on them

As the Buddha-land appears.

As soon as the light from this golden lotus shone upon Yang Qin and her daughter, their karmic enmity disappeared. The light radiated upon them again, and their resentment also vanished. The heart of resolute vengeance and anger completely dissipated.

At this moment, Yang Qin saw through the illusions of worldly phenomena. She no longer held attachment for the turbid conditions of samsara and, instead, engendered a transcendent, liberating heart.

The two of them, mother and daughter, then leapt onto the lotus seat. Auspicious signs appeared in the sky and, in a flash, both were transported to the Buddha-land.

This method of `magical transmuting to emptiness` is exactly the kind of method Maitreya Bodhisattva will use in the future when he is born into samsara.

This is the Buddhadharma Maitreya will use to save all beings.

This method of `mind-only magical transformation` is what Maitreya Bodhisattva will employ. As long as the light in Maitreya's heart shines upon the hearts of sentient beings, it will completely and instantaneously eradicate their karmic hindrances. Next, it will transform the hearts of the sentient beings into the heart of Maitreya This is mind-only magical transformation In this way, with the shining of the light and the resultant transformation, all sentient beings will be delivered to the Buddha-land.

According to my knowledge, all Buddhas and Bodhisattvas may employ different methods to aid sentient beings, yet the result is the same:

The Great Sun Tathagata - Bhutatathata (the absolute or ultimate reality)

Shakyamuni Tathagata - Prajna (wisdom)

Nagarjuna Bodhisattva - Madhyamika (middle way)

Padmasambhava - Yoga

Maitreya Bodhisattva - Yogachara (mind-only)

Amitabha - Pure Land

My employment of the Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva's decree was similar to Maitreya's `mind-only magical transformation.` This banner from a heaven beyond heavens transports one to the lands of the Buddhas and Immortals. It is none other than a portal into transcendent rebirths.

Wang Deng proceeded to ask me, `How can this mystery be solved?`

Before his eyes, I had only slightly waved a banner in my hand. `It has been resolved,` I replied.

`What method did you use?`

,

Our mind is like a master artisan. It can paint every phenomenon in the world. From it the five aggregates have sprung. Nothing is not created by the mind.`

`What kind of method is this mind method?` he asked.

`Light of mind and spirit.` I explained to Wang Deng, `In the future when Maitreya Bodhisattva descends into the world, he will use this method of `mind-only magical transformation.` The three realms (of Form, Desire, and Formlessness) are created by the mind. All phenomena have sprung from consciousness. Maitreya Bodhisattva only needs to use the light from the mind and spirit to shine upon all beings, and their minds will undergo transformation into the mind of Maitreya. In Maitreya`s Dragon Flower Assembly, all beings will be completely delivered.`

When Wang Deng heard this, he said, `I also would like to learn and practice Buddhism!`

`That is right. A person who studies and practices Buddhism sees through human lives that are fraught with desires and attachments. Such desires only give one temporary stimulation. Yet a moment of worldly pleasure is, in reality, a moment of delusion and confusion which will only lead to continual disturbances of spiritual tranquility. When the happiness is not the revitalizing, liberating kind, it is not really true happiness.`

`What should I do as a Buddhist?`

`First you must eradicate lust, anger, and delusion.`

`And the benefits for doing that?`

`One`s heart will be filled with light.`

Wang Deng knelt down to take refuge in me.

After returning home, all the strange happenings in his household completely disappeared. His normal pattern of sleep once again resumed, and the strange black and blue bruises vanished. The soreness in his joints also went away. He continuously cried aloud, `Living Buddha Lian-sheng is just inconceivable! Sheng-yen Lu is inconceivable!`

Wang Deng`s entire family took refuge to become Buddhists, and they have started doing virtuous deeds with sincere and utmost effort.

## Chapter 8: Ghost Woman

During a dinner party one evening, I was asked by an acquaintance to give an energy (chi) reading for everyone present. Among the group of guests at the table there were some I already knew, while others I was meeting for the first time.

A man by the name of Xu Ming spoke up and said, 'Though I have not met you personally until today, I have heard your name. Why not give me a reading first?'

I carefully observed Xu Ming and was surprised to observe the presence of ghost chi in his body. Upon stating this aloud, several people turned to me, stunned.

'Sheng-yen Lu, you are joking!'

Another responded, 'Well, that's not a very nice joke to make!'

And another said, 'What you say is irresponsible! How can you say such things so casually?'

Everyone was looking at Xu Ming, who appeared rather calm. 'But Mr. Lu is right! I have indeed been touched by ghost chi,' he said, shocking everyone even more with his admission. Turning to me he asked, 'How can I get rid of this ghost chi?'

I replied with the following poem:

Return home and chant the Huang Ting Jing;  
Wonderful benefits will be engendered;  
Put your heart and mind into observing the precepts;  
It 'the ghost chi' will be gone  
Naturally in three months time.

In addition to asking Xu Ming to chant the Huang Ting Sutra, I instructed him to observe a vegetarian diet and abstain from sex for three months.

After thanking me, Xu Ming asked, 'Mr. Lu, since you can see that I have the touch of ghost chi in me, can you tell me whether its presence will help or hurt me?'

I answered, 'Of course it is not good to have the presence of ghost chi in one's body. Nevertheless, from my observations, this ghost chi is from a woman spirit who harbors no hatred or enmity towards you. In this case, this ghost chi may not cause any great harm.'

After hearing this, Xu Ming was greatly impressed, 'Sheng yen Lu, you indeed live up to your reputation!' He then recounted to me and everyone present the following strange incident:

Xu Ming, a businessman and owner of a trading company, was on a business trip in Tokyo, when he encountered the following strange event. One night, during his stay on the sixth floor of a hotel, a beautiful woman suddenly appeared lying next to him. Xu Ming, believing he was in a dream, made love to the woman and had a very pleasant experience. Yet all the while, the woman seemed so real-he could even smell her perfume-that he was not sure if he was really dreaming or not.

Upon awakening the next morning, the woman was gone. He glanced around his bed, and the windows and doors were still locked. The room looked the same as it had the night before. Despite the clarity of the event, Xu Ming decided he had only been dreaming.

The second night, the woman came again. After making love for a second time, Xu Ming asked her where she was staying. She replied that she was staying in Room XX on the seventh floor.

When Xu Ming awoke, the woman had again disappeared. This time, he felt there was something strange about his experience and decided to take the elevator to the seventh floor to look for the woman. But, the elevator did not stop at the seventh floor. It stopped at the eighth, ninth, tenth, and remaining floors. Xu Ming then tried the stairway, but upon arriving at the seventh floor, he found the entrance sealed.

Xu Ming later inquired of the concierge, 'Who is staying in room XX on the seventh floor?'

'No one,' the concierge replied.

'Why is no one staying there?'

'Because the entire seventh floor is being renovated now, and no one is staying there!'

When Xu Ming heard this, he was flabbergasted.

The third night, in his dreams, the woman came again. This time when she made the initiative gesture to embrace him, he refused. He asked her again, 'Where do you live?'

'Room XX on the seventh floor.'

'But the entire seventh floor is being renovated now, and there is practically no one there. Are you human or ghost?'

As soon as the woman heard this, tears started running down her cheeks.

Flustered, Xu Ming said hurriedly, `You can talk to me. Don't cry. I just want to find out what this whole thing is about.`

The woman then told Xu Ming, `I'm doing this because I need to ask you a favor. That is why I offered myself to you.`

`What is the favor?`

`In your home town,` she asked, `is there someone by the name of Xu Yuan?`

`Yes, we are both from the same village and we were once classmates.`

`Xu Yuan is a ruthless and ungrateful man. When we first met here in Japan, I supported him and paid for his complete room and board and tuition fees. I also entrusted myself to him. We made a solemn pledge of love that we would not marry anyone else. But after graduation, he went back to his country and vanished without any news. Later, upon hearing he had already married someone else, I became sad and furious. I had invested my entire life's savings on him, giving him all my love and loyalty. Without him, there was nothing left in life for me. Depressed and angry, I killed myself, the woman wailed.

`So you're a ghost then?` Xu Ming asked shocked.

Suddenly, the woman's sad face morphed into that of a hanging ghost's, with blood dripping out of her orifices and a long tongue dangling from her mouth.

Xu Ming flinched, stepping back several paces. It had never occurred to him that the gorgeous woman he had been making love to the past couple nights was only beautiful on the surface. Underneath, she was actually a terrifying ghost reeking of rotting flesh.

The woman said, `If you help me, I will not hurt you.`

His heart beating rapidly, Xu Ming asked, `What can I do to help you out?`

`I have a golden hair ornament to which I can attach my spirit. Take the hairpin, go to room XX on the seventh floor, and call out my name. Room XX is where I hung myself. As soon as you call out my name, I will attach myself to the ornament. When you return home, toss this golden hairpin into Xu Yuan's house. Please help me. I definitely will not hurt you.`

`

But the seventh floor is sealed. How will I get inside?’

The ghost woman replied, ‘Well of course there is another entrance. How do you think the renovation workers get in?’

The next morning, with hairpin in hand, Xu Ming found the other entrance to the seventh floor, and went to room XX where

he called out the woman’s name.

Later, when Xu Ming returned to his hometown, he carried out the ghost woman’s wishes exactly as she had instructed. He went by Xu Yuan’s house and tossed the golden hairpin into his courtyard.

It so happened that on that day, Xu Yuan had planned a big party at his house. He had recently been promoted to a new government post and had invited a large number of guests for the celebration. Everyone was toasting him and Xu Yuan was extremely elated. His wife was by his side entertaining the guests.

Suddenly Xu Yuan felt a draft of cold air. The world around him began spinning, and he collapsed on the floor. When the ambulance arrived, the doctor said, ‘He probably had too much to drink. His is brain-dead due to a ruptured blood vessel, and he cannot be revived.’

Xu Yuan died, and his wife developed a severe sickness from which it took some time for her to recover.

After Xu Ming related this strange story, everyone then understood why he had the touch of ghost chi in him. They all shook their heads and sighed.

In today’s world, there are few who do not wish to enjoy a long life of good health and serenity. It is natural and normal for people to want to make more money and be promoted to higher positions. Yet, many also heartily indulge in sensual pleasures while, at the same time, swearing and making vows all too casually.

If one gives way to one’s carnal desires and takes the liberty to make bold vows, one can easily offend the ghosts and gods. People do not realize that every time one makes a vow, the vow is recorded in the spiritual realm. This is not something to be taken lightly. People of noble character take their promises seriously, while people of little integrity often make vows and forget them right away. Heartlessness and disloyalty are regarded as offensive by the world of spirits.

If one desires a long life, with good health and serenity, one must abstain from lust and sexual misconduct. If one desires a promotion and an increase in wealth, one must not offend the world of the spirits.

Xu Yuan`s deserved death was a result of his ruthlessness and betrayal!

Xu Ming`s contamination also was a result of his lust for carnal pleasure. Luckily the ghost chi had not brought him great harm and could easily be cleansed away by keeping a vegetarian diet and abstaining from sex for a short period of time.

Today people swear and make vows much too casually, as if they were eating ice cream. They do not keep their promises, as if it were the natural thing to do. How sorrowful this is!

## Chapter 9: The Golden Seal of Lord Guan Sheng

I often lament that, in this world of roaring dust, from ancient times until now, the number of people awakened are few and far outnumbered by those who are deluded. While it is difficult to encounter a spiritual adept, those ignorant of the spiritual truth can be found everywhere. This fact truly saddens me and reminds me of the following song:

How easily one is bedazzled by illusory fame and wealth;

All these sons of Buddha

Imprisoned in the world of red dust,

Only know how to enjoy themselves and struggle for power;

With total disregard for karma,

Accumulated debts

Silently entwine.

Frankly, my state of spiritual realization is completely natural, invisible, and inexpressible. So when worldly people and spiritual cultivators are suspicious or uncertain about me, they are not to blame. The state of realization is beyond words and cannot be seen or heard. Even if Mount Meru transformed into a paintbrush with the water of the four oceans as ink, such a state would be indescribable.

I can only say this:

Enlightened,

Resting in the Nature of the Mind,

Liberated from birth and death,

Emanating great lights,

One resides in the Ten Dharma Realms.

Once, while traversing the Ten Dharma Realms, I spotted with my wisdom eyes a jet stream of virtuous energy rushing forth and manifesting auspicious forms in the distant sky.

As the figures approached, I recognized the images of Lord Guan Sheng with his two generals, Zhou Cang and Guan Ping.

Then, from the roaring dust below, I saw a man slowly rise up to the sky. Enveloped by red clouds, he knelt before Lord Guan Sheng, as a golden seal was awarded to him. I asked in surprise, 'Who is this man?'

Lord Guan Sheng answered, 'Mr. Wen Ping.'

'Is he an accomplished adept?'

'Though not an accomplished adept, he is already half a saint.'

'To be half a saint is already quite rare in the world. I've got to remember his name.'

Lord Guan Sheng laughed, 'Your future will soon reveal whether or not there is affinity between you two.'

I responded, 'I do wish Mr. Wen Ping will continue on the path to Enlightenment, seeking the root of birth and death and reuniting with the Buddha Land.'

By chance or perhaps through karma, I witnessed the awarding of the golden seal to Mr. Wen Ping by Lord Guan Sheng, Zhou Cang, and Guan Ping. The thirteenth of the fifth lunar month was the Descension Day of Lord Guan Sheng. To be awarded a golden seal from him on that day was a true blessing, a result of Mr. Wen Ping's enshrinement and past twenty years of making offerings to the lord. Twice each day, in the morning and at night, Mr. Wen Ping offered incense and fruits to Lord Guan Sheng and chanted Jue Shi Zheng Jing (the Awakening from the World Sutra).

His sincere devotion had moved the deity. In his dreams, Mr. Wen Ping also saw Lord Guan Sheng awarding him the golden seal and, as a result, his life suddenly took a prosperous turn.

In another book of mine, I detailed the story of Master Cheng Yen of the Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation who in her early years had suffered a great many hardships. While staying temporarily at the Mother Empress Temple in Taitung in eastern Taiwan, she cried out from her heart to the Deity Mother Empress, a manifestation of the Golden Mother. When the Golden Mother saw that the Buddhist nun was a filial daughter, she bestowed upon her a wish-fulfilling bracelet that then led to a complete change in her luck.

Because of her compassion and hard work, along with blessings from the Golden Mother's wish-fulfilling bracelet, Master Cheng Yen founded and developed the Tzu Chi Foundation. People of the world know her charity work to be very successful, but only I am aware of the brilliantly radiating lights from the wish-fulfilling bracelet of the Golden Mother.

Let us return to the case of Mr. Wen Ping and the golden seal. Before the awarding of this seal, Mr. Wen Ping was living comfortably with small investments in restaurant and real estate businesses.

Suddenly, however, business in his restaurants began to flourish. Even when business in nearby establishments slowed, his restaurants would be crowded with customers. He expanded and opened many more restaurants throughout Taiwan, all which did extremely well.

With his restaurant profits, he increased his real estate investments, and with the escalation of the real estate market, Mr. Wen Ping quickly became a very rich man. His wealth brought him fame, and everyone soon knew his name. He moved into a luxurious home, drove imported sedans, dressed in expensive designer clothing, and dined on gourmet foods and wine.

Then one day, Mr. Wen Ping actually came to visit me.

‘How many lifetimes of wealth will I enjoy?’ he asked.

‘One should be satisfied with one lifetime of wealth,’ I responded.

Showing slight displeasure at my answer, he then asked, ‘Will I go to heaven?’

‘I am heaven, and you are hell,’ I replied.

Enraged he demanded, ‘Sheng-yen Lu, do you know what I have on my body?’

‘I know and I also don't know,’ I answered.

‘Stop being ambiguous. Apparently you have no idea at all. People say you are an expert diviner, yet it appears as if you are just a charlatan after all.’

‘I don't know but I also know,’ I said.

‘What is that supposed to mean? Whether you know or not, you better give me a straight answer. If you get it right, I will be convinced. If you say something vague, I will have your shop dismantled so you can't work anymore!’

Seeing that he would not be easily dismissed, I wrote down the words `Chop from Heaven` and showed them to him.

`What does that mean?`

`A chop is a seal, and this seal was bestowed by the heavens.`

He became silent for a moment.

I continued, `A seal from heaven, of course, calls for celebration, but, one must know how to cherish and keep it. Understand the importance of purification and practice it; otherwise, when one`s rewards are exhausted, disaster will descend.`

Wen Ping became angry and indignant, retorting, `I can see that you are just some quack who enjoys playing evil tricks on people. What `purification` are you referring to? I don`t need to hear any more of your garbage!` And with that, he left.

I sighed as I thought to myself, `What a pity! Although Mr. Wen Ping has been chanting the Awakening from the World Sutra for twenty years to merit a golden seal from Lord Guan Sheng, he only chants with his lips and does not truly understand the sutra`s meaning. I am worried that when his fortunes are exhausted, disaster will befall him. He was so enshrouded from the Self Nature that he did not even give my hints any consideration. There is no alternative but to let the situation run its course.

Later, I heard that Mr. Wen Ping was denouncing me to others, `Sheng-yen Lu`s psychic readings are inaccurate and vague. Don`t be deceived by this fraud. He is only after money and women.` With every visit to the temples, Wen Ping would also criticize me before the monks as `a quack, a swindler, a great mara, and a heretic.`

And all the while, he continued bragging about his moneymaking abilities while showing off his wealth. Dissatisfied with his luxurious residence, he purchased a piece of land upon which sat a huge mansion. After completely demolishing this mansion, he built a new, Versailles-like palatial home. As stunning as a castle and surrounded by baroque style sculptures and statues, each wall, brick, and tile was sculpted by hand. The floors inside were all laid with sparkling and resplendent Italian marble, and the room decorations were modeled after those of the Versailles Palace, the Palace of Fontainebleau, and Buckingham Palace. A man-made waterfall was installed in the courtyard, and the garden was specially commissioned with exquisite designs. Such a house was an awesome sight, and the owner`s extravagance was just as awesome!

Under the negative influence of some friends, Wen Ping began frequenting bar-restaurants, becoming fascinated with the nightclub lifestyle. Every night, he would feel amiss if he did not visit these restaurants. Along with gourmet foods, liquor, dancing and karaoke singing, tall, beautiful bar girls in dazzling, high slit chongsams waited at customers` tables. Some girls even had a unique way of `serving` wine by `feeding` their customers. The bar girl would first take a sip, hold the drink in her mouth, then press her lips against the customer`s lips, feeding the wine from her mouth into his. The customer would drink the wine, kiss the girl, and the two would fall all over each other, playing around and enjoying themselves.

Wen Ping quickly became drunk and giddy from the song and dance, food, wine, and women.

At such times, did Wen Ping recall the teachings from the Awakening from the World Sutra? The sutra advises against lusting after food, especially meat, which incurs the killing of lives, as well as liquor, which confuses the mind and diminishes judgment and control. When drunk, one`s sense of shame and embarrassment are no longer an issue, and one may also turn violent, cruel, and arrogant as one`s morals and ethics are disregarded.

Regarding promiscuity, the Awakening from the World Sutra calls for the observing of protocol and etiquette where one should observe moral customs and restrain one`s desires. A sense of shame is appropriate, as humility is one of the traits distinguishing humans from other beasts and birds.

In his drinking days, Wen Ping fell in love with a bargirl named Mei Fei. His corrupt friends encouraged him to take her out for a night and soon Wen Ping ended up taking almost every bar girl out for a night. He felt like an emperor with the girls as his concubines, and he began spending extravagant sums of money on them and the bar-restaurants.

In one cautionary moment, he had asked his friends if they found his actions sinful. Yet they replied, `This is just a fair trade involving monetary exchange between consenting parties. How can that be sinful?`

The bar girls were of course after his money and, knowing that Wen Ping was a rich man, they all vied to please him. As one might imagine, these girls are quite enveloped by material delusions and also carry heavy karmic hindrances. Disregarding their virtues and self-respect, they had long subjected their bodies to abuse from others. How sad that they do not understand their true Self Nature and meaning of life. By leading others into delusion, they continually trap themselves in cycles of transmigration. Unaware of the benefits of spiritual cultivation, they engage in non-righteous professions for the sake of money, ignorant to the truth underlying birth and death.

Some bar girls in Taiwan even worship statues of swine gods cradling women. The statues represent the womanizer Piggy from the novel, *Journey to the West*, and by praying to Piggy, the bar girls hope to enhance their profits by turning all men of this world into womanizing pigs. Many women working in the sex industry also worship in `common-folk temples` praying for better business and an increase of customers. Others pray that the `evil gods and wandering ghosts` from those temples will give them winning lotto numbers. With money as their ultimate goal, they turn to the worshipping of evil gods.

With evil leading evil, they will all continually cycle through the realms of transmigration.

Based on my knowledge, the following incident occurred in the world of the spirits.

On the twenty-fourth day of the twelfth lunar month-the day the kitchen god (Si-ming Zheng-jun) ascends to heaven to report the good and bad conduct of certain households-Wen Ping`s kitchen god ascended to heaven to make his report to Lord Guan Sheng.

Si-ming Zheng-jun stated,

Born of sex,

Died from sex;

He is lost as if in a dream,

Befuddled and dazed,

Completely blind and unaware;

This investigation reveals moral degeneration and lasciviousness.

Upon hearing the report, Lord Guan Sheng flew into a rage. His golden seal was intended to serve many honorable purposes. A person with the seal would not only have a hundred gods of fortune aiding and protecting him at all times, but he would also have the affinity to encounter the Buddha`s teaching to attain transcendence and liberation. How could someone wearing the golden seal act in such a frivolous and despicable manner?

Lord Guan Sheng immediately ordered his general Zhou Cang to withdraw the golden seal from Wen Ping and, with the sounding of a loud thunderclap throughout the heavens, the golden seal appeared in his palm. This golden seal, also known as the golden chop from heaven, is invisible to the naked eye and has existed since time immemorial.

When I learned of this incident, I became worried for Wen Ping. I even asked someone to send him an urgent message advising him to do a quick repentance.

But he refused to listen. With his great wealth, he now felt invincible. He had amassed so much money in this lifetime, he believed it could never be exhausted. As long as he avoided gambling, he thought, his lifestyle of frequenting bar-restaurants, dancing halls, and spending money on bar girls would not cause him to lose his money.

On one hand, he was right. One of the worst dreads facing a wealthy man is the habit of gambling. No matter how much money one has, an addicted gambler will eventually lose everything. If one does not gamble, then expenditures on bar-restaurants and dancing halls should not lead to a complete loss of wealth.

But Wen Ping also had a dream in which Zhou Cang appeared to retrieve the golden seal.

Wen Ping asked, `But you have already given me the golden seal. How can you take it back?`

Zhou Cang replied, `We are not only taking back the golden seal, we are also taking back your life.`

`How are you going to take my life?` Wen Ping asked.

Zhou Cang replied, `Haven't you read the Awakening from the World Sutra? You, man of debauchery, dare you test the power of this Green Dragon Crescent Sword?`

Upon awakening, however, Wen Ping felt no remorse or need for repentance. It had only been a dream, he thought to himself, and there was no need to be afraid.

The removal of the golden seal, which is, after all, an invisible chop from heaven, does not guarantee the befalling of disasters. Yet life is filled with unexpected storms and unpredictable vicissitudes.

Suddenly things started to go wrong. Several hundred people came down with food poisoning after consuming meals at one of Wen Ping's establishments. They were all taken to hospital emergency rooms and the origin was traced to bacteria contaminated food from his restaurant. Although there were no ensuing mortalities, it was a serious incident.

Wen Ping owned many restaurants. Numerous cases of food poisoning were suddenly reported at several of his restaurants and, after the news hit the newsstands, business took a swift dive. Customers dwindled and, though his businesses once flourished, Wen Ping started losing money.

One after another, his restaurants all folded. Although he opened new restaurants with new advertisements, none were successful.

Wen Ping's real estate possessions had also been very profitable. However, like his restaurants, these businesses also met the same fate. A large community project on which his company had started construction suffered severe damage in a fierce storm. The foundations were destroyed in a mudslide, and several of the tall buildings tilted and, had to be condemned. As a result, his company had to reimburse hundreds of thousands of dollars to the buyers. And to top it off, he was being sued for illegally colluding with government officials in the building of the project. It was a complete disaster!

In addition to financial troubles, Wen Ping had long been afflicted with cirrhosis of the liver, a result of his years of drinking. Half a year later, failing all medical intervention, he died!

From the bestowing of the golden seal to its revocation and Wen Ping's eventual death, I am reminded of the escalating darkness and turbidity in today's world. The sex industry is on the rise. Pornographic books and images plant improper thoughts in young people's minds. With its circulation, the publication of one pornographic book brings invisible harm to tens of thousands.

Perhaps authors of pornography feel they are only doing what they do for fun and for a profit. They may feel they should not be responsible for the actions of readers who, after all have the freedom to read or not read their publications. Yet, these authors should also consider this: if they had not produced such books and magazines, would images of half naked men and women be displayed on bookstands? When young people walk by the bookstands, they are drawn to these images. Who is responsible for creating and planting those seeds of lust and wickedness?

An individual who comes to mind, Zhang, a classmate from my elementary school days, had fallen prey to such temptations. He always received very good grades and, after performing well on the high school entrance examination, entered a prestigious school. Then, he became addicted to pornography, secretly buying pornographic books. At the time, although the government prohibited the selling of pornography, many books were sold on the black market. This friend would read the pornographic books and masturbate. He introduced the books to me as well and, when I first took a look, I was greatly shocked. It was a good thing that I did not get hooked.

Zhang was young and still growing but, before his physical vigor had a chance to fully mature, much of his vital chi was already lost. He gradually became sallow and emaciated and was sick all the time. Seeing his condition, his parents were extremely worried but unable to help him. Eventually Zhang had a nervous breakdown and had to stay for some time in a psychiatric ward.

Who were the culprits? Pornographic images and their creators were to blame.

Zhang, of course, is not the only person who has been harmed by pornographic books and pictures. The number of youngsters victimized is innumerable. Especially because young people are curious, they are easily influenced and excited by these books and magazines. They want to buy and read them, and even share them with their friends. Bedazzled and infatuated by the images, their bodies and minds suffer a leakage of invisible energy. They will also develop mistaken and abnormal ideas about human relationships.

Do not think that only young people are vulnerable; adults are just as susceptible! Older people who cannot withstand the temptations of pornography are everywhere. In Holland and Denmark, there are the `window ladies.` In Bangkok, the `bathing girls.` In Hong Kong, people visit prostitutes at their own apartments. In Taiwan, call girls work in places called `personal workshops.`

While in New York, I was stopped on the street one night by a young, black teenager. She handed me a slip of paper with the words, `Would you like a date with me?' I shook my head. The pretty black girl said to me, `I can make you a king.` I shook my head again. She then said, `I give good blow jobs. I'll make you feel like you are in heaven.` I said, `No.` She then opened her coat and, to my surprise, she was completely naked underneath! I turned pale with fright. As I ran away, I could hear her laughing loudly behind me.

Today, sex industries are everywhere. While visiting France, I noted the promiscuous practices of `wife trading`,` transvesticism`,` and `homosexuality.` Promiscuous women voluntarily fling themselves at men, and one only needs to look at the advertising industry to see the often subtle, but sometimes overt manifestations and exploitation of sexuality. The tentacles of sex have, indeed, penetrated every stratum and corner of society.

The constant barrage of such images and sounds unconsciously influences one`s mind. Especially when destructive friends urge one on, it is easy to succumb if one is not grounded in a stability developed from routine spiritual practice.

As one`s morals degenerate, the body and mind imperceptibly wastes away. The damage is not only confined to a loss of generative and spiritual energy, but more serious consequences, such as venereal diseases, infertility, and the loss of life may result. If one must face such consequences of sexual misconduct, one will probably be extremely remorseful. So I advise everyone to be careful and avoid entrapment by the world of pornography.

For Mr. Wen Ping, the golden seal from Lord Guan Sheng was originally a very auspicious and beautiful award. Unfortunately, after encountering such great luck, he did not take good care of the gift and began committing transgressions of sexual misconduct.

As a result, Lord Guan Sheng revoked the golden seal, and a most auspicious event thus transformed into an extremely disastrous situation.

Misfortune can lead to fortune,

Fortune can lead to misfortune,

Joy and grief share the same portal,

Luck and disaster coexists in the same domain.

All adverse and unfortunate situations contain seeds of luck and opportunities for positive transformation. All blessings may be accompanied by misfortune and disaster. Human existence is filled with both joy and sadness, just as luck and misfortune may spring from the same source.

If Mr. Wen Ping had not received the golden seal, he would have lived a relatively carefree, leisurely life. However, with the awarding of the golden seal and the bestowal of great fortune, his desires were aroused. As soon as one's desires increase, misfortune follows. Viewed from this perspective, the awarding of the golden seal can be seen as a challenge.

Although our ordinary senses cannot detect them, I have discovered that invisible gods and ghosts in the spirit world are supervising us. People who perform virtuous deeds will encounter improvements in their fate, with increases in prosperity, luck, life span, and wisdom. People committing non-virtuous acts will fall ill, be demoted, encounter unpredictable accidents, and have their life spans shortened.

The case of Mr. Wen Ping serves as a good testimony.

A student of mine obtained a talisman for good health which was drawn personally by me. He always carries the talisman with him and greatly cherishes it.

One time, while socializing at a club, he struck up a conversation with a pretty girl, but when his colleague urged him to take off with her, a voice suddenly spoke into his ear, `Don't!`

`How strange! That was obviously the voice of the Grand Master,` he thought. But when he glanced around he did not see the Grand Master present. A while later, he heard another `Don't!` Terribly suspicious, he looked around again, but the Grand Master was nowhere to be seen. From where had the voice come?

This student worked in the public relations department of his company, and it was hard for him to avoid socializing scenes. Until that day, he had always successfully suppressed and resisted temptation from other women. Married and the father of a young child, he had taken the Bodhisattva Vows and practiced the True Buddha Tantric Dharma.

Yet, at that moment, he felt a karmic attachment from a previous life drawing and entwining him to this pretty girl. At first sight, he was immediately attracted to her innocent face and her soft, delicate physique. There was no way to tell that she was a call girl and, as soon as they started to converse, they got along extremely well. He started paying her extra attention, and when she gave him the `go-ahead` signal, he did not rebuff her advances. His friend urged him on, as sexual scenes flashed through his mind. Just as he was about to give in and take off with the girl, he heard for the third time, `Don`t!`

Suddenly pulled to reason, he remembered the teachings of the Tantric gurus: `All leakages lead to falls.` Without the arousal of sexual desire, generative energy disperses throughout the five major internal organs and runs through the left, right, and white channels. When sexual desires flare, the five major internal organs will be consumed by the fire of lust, and one`s essence will drain through the gate of vitality, the area between the kidneys. Even if no overt drainage occurs, once stirred, the fire of lust will slowly heat and dry the body like a fierce fire drying a clay pot of evaporating water. Many young people are filled with vigorous sexual desires and, if this desire is not moderated or channeled properly, these thoughts can drive the individual to poor health and actual illness.

This student of mine, alerted to remember these teachings, took his chance to flee from the trap. That night, his colleague took the pretty girl home and spent the night with her. Although the encounter had been a one night stand, his colleague came down with an extremely painful urinary tract infection and had to be taken to the emergency room for treatment. It was then that they learned he had contracted a venereal disease from the innocent-looking, pretty lady.

Although his colleague did not die from the infection, he suffered pain and distress. Other colleagues made fun of him, and he complained that he had been unfairly victimized.

My student later came to relate these events to me, thanking me for the good health talisman that he felt had saved him. `Grand Master,` he asked, `did you voice that warning to me because you knew what I was about to do?`

I only smiled.

He asked again, and I answered, `Although we are not aware of it, the world of spirits surrounds us.`

## Chapter 10: Si-lu Shen, the God of Reward and Compensation

People take great delight in discussing the accuracy of my spiritual divinations and predictions.

An early example that comes to mind was the occasion when Wei Ching Ping, the vice captain of my troop, Unit 5802, had wanted me to deduce, on the spot, the number of coins he held in his clenched fist.

‘Fourteen,’ I replied.

The vice captain himself had no idea how many coins he held. But, after opening his fist and counting them, his eyes opened wide. There were exactly fourteen coins in his hand. Following this incident, Wei Ching Ping took refuge in Buddhism and started the practice of chanting sutras and the Buddha’s epithet.

On another occasion, a person with a sharp tongue derided his family for believing my divinations. He approached me during a gathering, making outlandish, sarcastic remarks and accusations.

Stepping forward he asked me, ‘Do you know what I was doing last night?’

‘Playing mah-jong,’ I replied.

A wave of surprise swept across his face. Though momentarily caught off guard by my answer, he quickly said, ‘All right, so I was playing mah-jong. But can you figure out how much I won or lost?’

This was a bigger challenge. The crowd turned their eyes upon me.

‘Eight hundred eighty,’ I said.

The man with the sharp tongue began yelling, ‘Correct, correct, correct! This is unbelievably accurate. Can such ability really exist in the world?’

Everyone applauded. The man continued, ‘Initially, I had lost only eight hundred dollars. I was about to take the loss and leave when someone at the next table asked me to lend him eighty dollars. Because it was such a small amount, I decided to just give him the money. Well, he lost the eighty dollars too. So, I myself lost eight hundred, and this person lost eighty for me. Overall, it was exactly eight hundred eighty.’

Still another time, a young man who adamantly refused to believe in divinations came to my residence under his family's coercion. Huddled in a corner of the room, he refused to come forward to see me.

In response to his family's appeals he yelled, 'All divinations are just hoaxes. All 'psychics' are swindlers, quacks, and frauds.'

Turning to him I calmly stated, 'In this world, truth and untruth exist side by side. Many frauds do exist, but instead of automatically disbelieving everything, why not take a closer look to discern the frauds from the genuine practitioners?'

'I don't care to,' he replied. 'I just know you are a fraud.'

'Well, what if I find out something about you!'

'I don't think so!' he said stubbornly.

'Your right thigh is scraped, and it was bleeding as a result of you falling off your scooter yesterday. Am I correct?'

Staring hard at me he said, 'I have not told anyone about this, not even my family. No one knew except myself. How did you find out?'

He rolled up his trouser leg to show everyone. Indeed, there was a wound with clotted blood on his right thigh. He had put antibiotic ointment on the wound himself. Finally, he walked forward to where I was sitting and allowed me to conduct a divination for him. Everyone cheered.

In general, most of my divinations turn out correctly. But there have been times when my predictions were wrong. What happened in these cases? I will explain.

A high official who wanted to become the head of his department once approached me and asked, 'Will I become the head of my department?' This official's last name was Deng, and he was competing for the position against three other candidates-Zhao, Chen, and Liang.

'You will,' I replied.

Half a year later, when the appointment was announced, Chen, not Deng, was selected as the department head. Furious, Deng came to interrogate me. My prediction had affirmed he would become the department head, and I now appeared to be wrong. Was I really a fraud?

‘How do you explain this?’ he questioned.

I did not know what to say, and my face and ears turned red.

Deng asked again, ‘Did you not say I would get the position? Explain what happened!’

I was speechless. My only response was, ‘To tell you the truth, I myself had no idea who would be appointed to the position. I was just repeating what Si-lu Shen (the God of Reward and Compensation) was telling me.’

‘Si-lu Shen? Where is Si-lu Shen?’

‘Si-lu Shen is invisible.’

‘This is preposterous,’ Deng remarked resentfully.

One can imagine the embarrassing situations I occasionally found myself in when people came to interrogate me for predictions that had gone wrong. I would look dejected and have nothing to say. At such moments, my only option was to call out for Divine help.

In this particular incident, a flash suddenly appeared before my eyes. It was Si-lu Shen, the deity of reward and compensation, and he began writing in the air the pictogram for sexual misconduct. Beneath the word, he also wrote the date of the act.

‘You committed a sexual misconduct!’ I said to Deng.

He denied the accusation.

‘It occurred on day XX in the month of XX.’ Deng again replied, ‘No.’

I was stupefied. The image of Si-lu Shen writing the pictogram for sexual misconduct was clear. The date of the incident had even been relayed. How could he deny it? I refused to believe him.

I pressed further, ‘Please think again carefully.’

Deng thought hard and made some calculations to make sure he had the right date. Still he denied the charge.

At this point Si-lu Shen gave me more specific information. It turned out that Deng had been peeping at a woman bathing next door. When I heard this, I almost broke out laughing, but was afraid to.

I said to Deng, `It was not a sexual liaison. You were peeping at a woman next door taking a bath.`

When Deng heard this, it was his turn to be stunned. Without saying a word, he lowered his head and left.

Based on what I learned, this was the situation. Several months prior to the appointing of the department head, a single woman had moved into the house next door to Deng`s. The woman was beautiful and very poised, and Deng could not help but stare at her each time they ran across one another. A window in Deng`s house directly faced the bathroom of the house next door.

On the date in question, while taking a bath, the woman had forgotten to close the window blinds. When Deng saw this, he immediately fetched his binoculars and stood at his window watching the entire bathing scene from beginning to end. While peeping at the woman from head to toe, he became very excited. His mind was overtaken by carnal desire, and he muttered to himself, `It would really make my day if I could sleep with her for just one night!`

Si-lu Shen explained, `Although Deng physically did not commit any sexual act with the neighboring woman, he should immediately have excused himself from the window when he noticed that she was taking a bath. Instead, he watched her from beginning to end. Not only were his eyes moved, but his mind as well. Once a mind of inappropriate sexual desire is aroused, even if not acted out, a sexual misconduct has occurred. This was the reasoning behind his delayed promotion. Because of his inappropriate actions, he will have to wait six years to become department head.

In another incident, a lieutenant general, Lu Gu, sought me for a consultation.

Lu Gu said to me, `Living Buddha Lian-sheng, I have heard that your spiritual divinations are very accurate. That is why I have come to see you today. When I was young, my parents had asked a Master Ye, an expert in the Iron Board Divination methods, to give me a life reading. According to his divination, at age eighteen, I would be the top student in the national university entrance examinations. I would then study at the military academy and obtain my Ph.D. at twenty-seven. Three years later, I would leave for the United States and obtain another doctoral degree there. At the age of fifty-three, I would be promoted to the rank of general.`

Lu Gu continued, `Master Ye was an expert in the art of Iron Board Divination, and he charged premium prices for his work. He was very selective with his services and would not even work on a case if he thought the client would lead an insignificant life. One had to make appointments months in advance to see him.

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Master Ye's first prediction was very accurate. I indeed ranked at the top of my class in the national university entrance examinations. The predicted year in which I would receive my first doctoral degree was slightly off. I received my Ph.D. at the age of twenty-nine instead of twenty-seven. Three years later, I went to the United States and obtained another doctorate. That prediction came true as he had forecast. However, his final prediction, that I would become a general at the age of fifty-three, is quite off. I am now fifty-six years old and am still a lieutenant general. Several opportunities to be promoted to the rank of general have passed me by. My question is, Master Lu, 'When will I become a general?'

Using my own spiritual divination method to find an answer for Lu Gu, I first held the mudra for 'emolument,' then the mudra for the 'current two-hour period,' and finally the 'invocation mudra.' Then I mentally chanted this mantra:

Clouds and oceans roar when the mantra rises;

Pointing at the Empty Space in the Dharma Realm;

Movements are the keys, opening the lock;

In stillness, the sun cleaves the flood,

Revealing interactions between yin and yang;

The Immortal in charge of reward and compensation manifests;

Ji-ji-ru -tai-s hang-lao-jun-lu -ling.

After chanting the mantra three times, a drop of bright light manifested. As it gradually expanded, Si-lu Shen, the God of Reward and Compensation, appeared. I asked him about the life readings of Lu Gu. Si-lu Shen replied with an answer very close to that given by Master Ye.

I asked again, 'Why was there a two years delay in the first doctoral degree?'

The God of Reward and Compensation replied, 'He would have obtained the doctorate on time, but on one occasion, after drinking too much liquor, he went with several student friends to a brothel. After being teased, he paid for a prostitute and spent the night in the brothel to prove to his friends that he had the guts to do so. Because of this, his doctoral degree was delayed two years.'

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Spending a night with a prostitute caused a delay of two years?" I asked.

Si-lu Shen replied with the following verses:

Do not underestimate the power of a prostitute,

leaning seductively against the door;

A noble man guards his body as if it were made of jade;

A flawed, fallen flower

Will stain pure jade;

The loss of money and harm brought to the body

Will affect one's life,

And infections will incur great disasters.

Si-lu Shen then added, "A delay of two years was a minor penalty. If he had caught a sexually transmitted disease, he might even have died."

Startled, I did not know what to say.

Then I asked Si-lu Shen again, "Lu Gu was supposed to be promoted to the rank of general at the age of fifty-three. Why, at the age of fifty-six, is he still a lieutenant general?"

Si-lu Shen wrote the two words "Mo Shu" in the air.

"What does Mo Shu mean?" I asked.

Si-lu Shen answered, "It is the name of a person."

"Does this person have something to do with Lu Gu?"

"Naturally," replied Si-lu Shen. "Lu Gu is a very gifted man in the arts of letters as well as the military. His liaison with a prostitute in his younger years had already cost him two years. That was a minor penalty."

In his middle years, however, instead of mending his ways, he became fond of men. Mo Shu was a good-looking young man among his subordinates. The two of them had been in a relationship for eight years. Lu Gu should consider himself lucky to have risen to the official rank of lieutenant general. How can he even hope to attain the important post of a general? He is only interested in his own rank and salary, yet he does not realize that he has created a karmic retribution for himself.

‘What will happen to Lu Gu in the future?’

‘The retribution will befall his son.’

‘What will happen to his son?’

‘Lu Gu will lose his heir, and his son will die.’

I was greatly shocked to hear this.

I decided to first discuss with Lu Gu the reason for his two years delay in obtaining his doctorate degree.

Lu Gu admitted, ‘That did happen. We were a group of young men out for a night of fun. I would never have imagined that the incident could push back my degree by two years.’

Next, I brought up the reason as to why he had not been promoted to the rank of general. I wrote the name ‘Mo Shu’ on a piece of paper and handed it to him. After he saw the name, he lowered his head silently.

‘Is it really true?’ I asked.

‘Yes,’ Lu Gu nodded. He then stood up and spoke to me, ‘Living Buddha Lian-sheng, your spiritual divination is indeed the best. I have now finally understood that, although one’s fate is predestined, it still undergoes changes. All these changes ultimately are caused by our own mind.’

‘Very well said,’ I responded. ‘I hope you take this truly to heart, and I hope you will be spared the retribution!’

As Lu Gu left, I handed him a sheet of paper with the following warning:

Because sexual relations between man and woman are deemed right and proper,

Throwing the rules into chaos

Causes one to incur hidden stains and shame;

Reputation and money will be lost,

And in severe cases,

The loss of lives will result;

Please turn your head to look at your son,

Retribution does call without fail.

A short time later, Lu Gu`'s son died in a car accident, and his only heir was taken away from him! Si-Lu Shen`s prediction was indeed terribly accurate.

Another incident related to Si-lu Shen involves Yuan Mao, the boss of a metal factory, who came to consult me many years ago.

Si-lu Shen had given the prediction that after fifteen years, `Yuan Mao would become a super rich man.`

However, about thirteen years later, Yuan Mao`s factory closed and, because he had so many outstanding loans, he had to flee his home country and move to the United States.

Yuan Mao had a very hard time in the United States. He tried setting up a stall in the flea market but made very little money. He also tried working as a construction worker. Although he had been a factory owner before, he now had to climb up and work on roofs. Because he was not very good at it, he was fired from his job. He finally found work in a restaurant, but barely made enough money to survive.

Later, when he learned that I had relocated to the United States, he looked up my address and took the Greyhound bus to find me.

When I saw him the morning he arrived, I was quite shocked. The Yuan Mao I once knew had shiny black hair and dressed in well-pressed suits. He had a personal secretary and a chauffeur who drove him around in a black luxury sedan.

But the Yuan Mao standing before me now in a tattered jacket was unkempt and had a full head of grayish hair. His face was covered with wrinkles and he appeared travel-worn and weary. He truly looked like someone down on his luck.

He had not yet had his breakfast, and I invited him into the house and offered him some bread and a glass of hot milk.

Yuan Mao asked me, `Si-lu Shen said I would become a great and wealthy businessman in fifteen years. What has happened to me?`

`How many years have now passed?` I asked him.

Yuan Mao did some calculations and said, `It is exactly fifteen years now. Si-lu Shen was wrong, and your spiritual divination was also wrong!`

I did not know how to respond to him.

`Why has this prediction turned out so wrong?` Yuan Mao`s face showed the pains of frustration and the helplessness of someone who felt he had been wronged.

He continued, `The year my factory was at the height of its success, I invited you to give my factory a feng-shui reading. I carried out your recommendations and corrected the fengshui problems. I also asked you to give me a life reading, and you predicted that I would reach my peak and become extremely rich in fifteen years. Now, it is exactly fifteen years later, and I am at the end of my rope! What do you have to say to this?`

`I really don`t know what happened...,` I replied, sweating.

Yuan Mao said, `Now I really don`t know what to do with my life! You tell me. What should I do?`

`What if I gave you another reading now?`

`Reading? What kind of reading is this going to be?` he asked, getting a bit hot tempered.

I closed my eyes. Surprisingly, I saw Si-lu Shen with two children, one on each side of him.

`Whose children are these?` I asked.

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They are the spirits of the unborn children of Yuan Mao,` Si-lu Shen replied.

Oh! I now understood. In the past ten years or so, Yuan Mao had committed the transgression of aborting two unborn fetuses.

`Yuan Mao, you committed killings. Your partner has aborted two fetuses.`

Yuan Mao retorted, `But many people have abortions. It can't be that severe of a transgression, can it?`

Si-lu Shen again appeared. This time he shook his head and pointed his finger to the empty space above us. A convent suddenly came into view and a young, beautiful nun walked out holding hands with the same children I saw earlier, one child on each side.

Shocked by what I saw, I again immediately understood.

I turned to Yuan Mao, `What you did was really terrible. You defiled a nun! Were the two babies borne by a nun?`

This time, it was Yuan Mao`s turn to start sweating.

`But the nun had also liked me!`

I sighed and said, `Temples not only house Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, and Dharma Protectors, but also monks and nuns pursuing spiritual cultivation and pure awareness. The transgression of seducing a monk or nun is much more severe. You behaved improperly by having sex with a nun, impregnating her twice, and causing her to have two abortions. What a heavy transgression that is! That is why you are down and out on your luck today.`

`Was that the cause?`

`Of course,` I replied.

`What should I do now?`

`Make a vow now to uphold the precepts. There is also a need for you to write a ceremonial prayer of intent. List your name, the date and time of your birth, and make a vow to Heaven and Earth that you will never commit such transgressions again. Sign the prayer and burn it. From now on, repent of all your mistakes in the past and be very careful to stay away from all thoughts and actions of sexual misconduct.

Vow to uproot all sins and walk the rightful path. In addition, you must harbor good thoughts from now on. Talk to others or distribute pamphlets advising them to avoid sexual misconduct. The sutra says that by avoiding sexual misconduct, one can gain the five blessings and avoid falling into the three lower paths of rebirth. You must make vigorous efforts to redeem yourself.`

Yuan Mao nodded.

There is the following poem, passed down to us, regarding sexual misconduct with spiritual cultivators:

They have immersed themselves in practices to liberate themselves from the world;

How can one romance and flirt with spiritual cultivators?

Breaking precepts and ruining names,

Disrupting the quietness of a Buddhist sanctuary;

Nothing escapes the eyes of gods;

Although the coupling takes place stealthily,

Punishment from the government and the spirit world will be heavy;

What a trap to sink one into a lower realm!

I saw Yuan Mao out and gave him two thousand U.S. dollars, wishing him luck in starting a new life.

I have a few thoughts regarding the incident of Yuan Mao. I have seen the movie, *The Thorn Birds*, which is about the love and conflict between a Catholic priest and a woman who desires the priest. This movie brings to mind the incidents of female and male devotees who seduce monks and nuns, monks who seduce nuns, and vice versa.

Such incidents do exist. In fact news of this nature often garners quite a bit of media coverage as reporters immediately try to exploit the stories. Whatever the actual situation, people seem to love reading scandals relating to spiritual cultivators. The printing of such stories boosts sales. The media, propagating such scandals, has the power to confuse right and wrong; and often times, not many people actually stop to consider the moral truths to the story.

In terms of karma, a spiritual cultivator committing sexual misconduct can incur terrifying results. This is because one has knowledge about the teachings of the Buddhadharma, yet continues to commit the transgression.

According to the Buddhist sutras, a person committing sexual misconduct will suffer retribution such as betrayals from spouses and daughters, dying without sons, falling into the three lower realms (animals, hungry ghosts, or hells) after death, or waiting an inexorable time to regain the body of a human.

People who commit sexual misconduct will lose their status, suffer a loss of reputation, and lose their money. Licentious people will have many illnesses, age faster, and will not live long. They will be reprimanded by society and incur great enmities. Also, what suffers ultimately is the reputation of the religion to which they belong! When a woman seduces a monk, a man seduces a nun, or a monk and nun together break the precepts, a great evil is committed.

This is why, among the five important Buddhist rules observed by monks and nuns, the rule prohibiting sexual misconduct is of the utmost importance. Sages who have transcended the world, virtuous people living in the world, and noble people who have understood the path to realization have long realized the origin of lascivious desires and their dire consequences. Some people advocate breaking off the desire, others advocate temperance and abstinence, while Tantrayana advocates channeling the desire and transforming it into a practice.

It is within this scope and based on good intentions that I place my efforts into spreading this message. I simply hope that everyone can break this barrier of illusion of the flesh and transform a mundane pleasure into true purity and ultimate bliss.

In Tantrayana practices:

Body is the generation of wind and light in the subtle energy channels;

Speech is the mutual circulation of drops of chi;

And Mind is the attainment of great bliss and pure awareness.

I, of course, am aware that before attaining realization, monks and nuns are ordinary beings and thus will err. But, they must still try their best to observe the precepts. As outlined in the Divine rules, misfortunes befall those who are licentious. One should often repent for one's transgressions, oneself.

One should publicize and disseminate good books and sutras that will benefit the minds of men. This will help people of the world understand the futility of pursuing physical and material pleasures, and the suffering that inevitably follows unbridled lasciviousness and sexual misconduct. Only in this way will morals and customs gradually become virtuous, as the hearts of men develop kindness and honesty, and society grows towards harmony and peace.

I offer, here, the following verse:

The body is the foundation of all tasks;

Activities that harm the body are many and varied,

Yet none is more cruel and fierce than lascivious desires;

A noble man regards his body as a piece of jade,

Abandoning wicked thoughts and deeds,

Preserving it with sincerity.

## Chapter 11: Night Trial at the City God's

One night, I was suddenly paid a visit by two spirit guards who wanted to escort me to the City God's Temple.

‘What is the matter?’

‘We don't know,’ they replied. ‘Just come along with us.’

I was on very good terms with many City God Bodhisattvas, especially the City Gods at Chiayi, my birthplace, and Taichung, where I had resided for many years. When I needed a favor, I often turned to them for help and, when they ran into problems, they also asked me for help.

In the middle of the night, I arrived with the two guards at the City God's temple. The place was brightly lit, and City God Bodhisattva himself was sitting at the presiding chair. On both sides of him stood literary and military judges as well as guardians with bull or horse heads and human bodies.

When the City God saw me, he immediately asked his subordinates to bring in a desk and a chair for me.

‘Is this a night trial?’ I asked.

‘Yes.’

‘Why have I been invited?’

‘The issue concerns you.’

‘Me?’

‘You are, of course, not the one on trial,’ City God Bodhisattva said in jest. ‘If anyone were to try you, it would have to be the Primordial Ancient Buddha himself! Ha ha!’

The criminal was brought into court and made to kneel. His hands and feet were manacled. When I looked, I was shocked to find it was Zheng Ke.

Who is Zheng Ke? This same Zheng Ke, who now knelt before the judges, had just visited me at home the previous morning. He had brought with him many of my books and asked to take refuge to become my student. Because he was very resolute and sincere, I gave him refuge. How could a student who had just taken refuge the previous morning now be on trial at the City God's temple?

Zheng Ke did not notice my presence. Perhaps the City God Bodhisattva had deliberately placed my seat in a shadowed spot so Zheng Ke would not recognize me.

The City God asked Zheng Ke, `On day XX of the month of XX, you raped a woman. Do you admit to committing the crime?`

`Yes!` Zheng Ke answered, his head lowered.

`Are you penitent for what you have done?`

`Yes`

`Why are you penitent now?`

`Because I have read the books of Living Buddha Lian-sheng Sheng-yen Lu. In his books, he mentioned the two harmful consequences of raping a woman. First, the trauma inflicted upon the woman hurts and breaks her body and spirit. Second, it exerts a bad moral influence upon society when foolish people, devoid of honor, emulate and collude. People perpetuating this type of evil behavior will meet with inexorable doom.`

`Well stated!` said the City God. `But can you prove that you are truly repentant?`

`I took refuge in Living Buddha Lian-sheng Sheng-yen Lu this morning.`

`What did this Living Buddha Sheng-yen Lu teach you?`

Zheng Ke answered, `Not only did he teach me about the threefold refuge in the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha, he also taught me a verse!`

`Let me hear this verse!`

Zheng Ke recited, `Ponder the day when one dies, when the fire of carnal desire will immediately cool. Foolish people knit their brows and consider thoughts of death inauspicious and unpleasant. Yet in a hundred years, everybody now living will perish. This bodhisattva view of death is the log that ferries one across the sea of suffering.`

The City God was visibly moved by the verse, as were all the spirits present.

City God Bodhisattva then spoke to Zheng Ke, `The intention of this night trial was to sentence you to a severe punishment that would have caused your muscles and sinews to waste away until you died. Now that you have taken refuge in the Triple Jewels and also shown true repentance, you may be exonerated from the death sentence. However, you shall not completely escape punishment. You shall have both your feet nailed together.`

From both sides of the hail, ghost guards rushed forward to hold Zheng Ke upon the ground. With the sharp clang of metal, Zheng Ke felt a bone-crunching pain. He let out a loud cry and passed out.

A month later, Zheng Ke came to see me. He was walking with a crutch.

`What happened?` I asked him.

`When I woke up the morning after taking refuge in you, both my feet were in such great pain that I could not walk!`

`Could this be related to karma?`

`I have no idea. I wondered if it had anything to do with taking refuge in you. How could it be that, immediately after taking refuge in you, I became immobilized the next day? I know that your teachings concerning the threefold refuge, avoidance of all evils, enacting of virtuous deeds, and purification of the mind are the true Buddhadharma. These teachings of Shakyamuni Buddha are the truth. Yet I am puzzled by what happened to me, and that is why I have come to you today.`

Not wanting to tell him the whole story, I only smiled and asked, `Have you seen a medical doctor for your problem?`

`I have seen several, but they could not determine the cause of the problem. I have also taken many herbal medicines to no avail. Some people said I had been assaulted by noxious chi from spirits, so I invited monks to perform rituals for me. I still have not seen any improvement in my condition. Master, can you find out for me the cause of this problem?`

I, of course, knew the karmic causes behind his affliction, but I did not want to tell him how I had learned the information. So, instead, I said that I would make an investigation.

`Before taking refuge,` I asked him, `did you commit any grave transgressions?`

`Grave transgressions?` Zheng Ke shook his head after thinking for a moment. Then he asked me, `What constitutes a grave transgression?`

`

In Buddhism, the five grave sinful behaviors are: killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, false speech, and imbibing intoxicants. The category of killings is actually quite broad. Besides the actual taking of lives, it also applies to destruction and harming others. So, the killing of men, women, babies, animals, and the destruction of temples and monasteries are also grave transgressions. Harming Buddhist teachers, monks and nuns, family and friends, one's own master, and people who trust one are grave transgressions as well.

Zheng Ke responded, 'I have done none of those things.'

'Think again. It is so easy for sentient beings living in samsara to sin in mind and deed. Can you really be totally free from sin?'

Zheng Ke was silent.

I asked, 'What happened on day XX of the month of XX?'

Startled, Zheng Ke asked, 'Master, so you do know about it?'

'Somewhat.'

'Was that really a serious transgression?' Zheng Ke asked me.

He then proceeded to relate the following story:

On one occasion, during a chance meeting, Zheng Ke happened to be alone with the wife of a colleague, and the two of them had become engaged in an absorbing conversation. Zheng Ke found the woman very attractive and a sexual thought suddenly flashed through his mind. After chatting for some time, he proposed to the woman, 'We have been talking here for so long now. What about trying something different?'

The woman asked, 'What different thing are you referring to?'

Zheng Ke said, 'Let's not talk anymore about philosophical viewpoints. Let's try something more immediate and stimulating.'

The woman was clueless and repeated, 'More immediate and stimulating?'

'You know, like people do in R and X rated movies.'

'We certainly will not!' the woman remarked.

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Well, all right then. Let`s just play stone, paper, scissors.`

`Stone, paper, scissors?`

`Yes, it is just a game. The one who loses strips.`

`What if I lose?` the woman protested.

`Well you may not necessarily lose. I might very well be the one who loses,` Zheng Ke replied.

Believing she would win, and also hoping to take advantage of Zheng Ke, the woman agreed to the game. The two shouted excitedly, `Stone, paper, scissors. The loser strips.`

At first, Zheng Ke had a losing streak and ended up with only his underwear on. But then the woman began losing. Since Zheng Ke had taken off his clothing, she could not very well refuse to strip. After several more games came the final shout, `Paper!`

The woman lost again and had to take off her last article of clothing. She wanted to run away, but Zheng Ke grabbed her. At that moment, blood rushed through his body, and he could not control himself. In a heat of passion, he advanced a further request on the woman.

The woman said, `We can`t do that!`

`What about one more game. We`ll let fate decide.`

The woman again felt that she would not lose, but in the next game, Zheng Ke played scissors and the woman played paper. Scissors won, and paper lost. Zheng Ke forced himself upon the woman, and she yielded with a show of reluctance. Thus, the two entered into a different type of `dialogue.`

Zheng Ke asked me, `But I had won and she acquiesced. Was it still a sin of sexual misconduct?`

I glared at him, at a loss for words.

Finally I spoke to him, `The purpose of spiritual cultivation is to cultivate the heart and mind. A `stone, paper, scissors` competition is, of course, not a transgression in and of itself, but your motives were improper. You used the game as a means to rape a woman, and that is a transgression.`

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Master, would you mind if I told you something?` Zheng Ke then said. `Before coming here, I told myself that I would not bring this up. But I have to tell you now. Because I had been unable to walk the day after taking refuge, I had consulted with many monks from other temples, and every one of them had told me that...`

He stopped short, and I waited quietly for him to continue.

He asked again, `Would it be all right for me to repeat what they said?`

`Of course,` I laughed.

`They made some pretty ugly accusations!`

`I'm sure I have heard worse!` I told him candidly.

`They said that Living Buddha Lian-sheng Sheng-yen Lu is a great mara and the greatest evil master in the religious community. They said you scheme for money and sex and are a great liar. According to them, many people have been fooled by you because you are a very good trickster, and many of your female disciples are in love with you and are being cheated by you. They asked me why I had taken refuge in a demon and a heretic instead of a proper Buddhist master. The fact that both my feet became immobilized immediately after taking refuge in you was, they claimed, the best evidence yet that you are a demon and heretic.`

`Anything else?` I asked calmly.

`That`s all. They said the problem with my feet was a result of my taking refuge in the wrong person.`

I began disseminating the Dharma at the age of twentysix, and I am now fifty-seven years old. For thirty years, I have heard these same attacks and accusations. Do you have anything new to add?`

`No.`

I said to Zheng Ke, `Fine, because these Buddhist masters have scolded me, and you have come back, I will help you out. I will cure the problem with your feet, and if I fail, I will never call myself Sheng-yen Lu again.` Zheng Ke was happy to hear this.

I first sought out my close friend the City God Bodhisattva. The solution, I figured, would be a swift removal of the nail from Zheng Ke`s feet.

Unexpectedly, the City God shook his head when he heard my request. `Old Lu, you are wrong this time! This nail is not an ordinary nail. It is a Divine Nail dispensed by the Jade Emperor himself.`

`Can it be so serious?' My face turned pale.

`Do you know who Zheng Ke is?`

`No, I don't.`

`In his former life, Zheng Ke was Yu Tao, a successful candidate in the highest imperial examinations during Ming Emperor Chong Zhen's reign. While in office in the Jiangsu Province, he had, altogether, raped nine people.`

`Oh! He is a repeat offender. He deserves the punishment.`

`Exactly.`

`So the Divine Nail cannot be removed?`

`Exactly.`

Now I was in a difficult situation. I had no other solution but to pay a visit to the Jade Emperor.

Some people may wonder, `If the City God Bodhisattva is your close friend, and you can visit the Jade Emperor at will, then who are you really, Living Buddha Lian-sheng?`

This is my reply:

Trespassing eons and countless moons, Stretching from beginningless time to endless time,

I am the Indestructible Vajra;

I face neither birth nor death;

Amitabha stands before you;

Why trek thousands of miles looking for him?

At the Virtuous Dharma Hall Heaven, I met with the Jade Emperor. Coming straight to the point, I asked him to remove the Divine Nail from Zheng Ke's feet.

My request, however, put the Jade Emperor in an awkward position. He said to me, `Removing the Divine Nail is an easy task; however, carrying out the order may be difficult. After all, to remove such a karmic hindrance, one must enter into a pure and undistracted state of mind, sweeping away the ten evils and eight improper practices, remaining totally unstained by the bondages of love, affection, passion, and desire, and extinguishing all greed, wrath, and delusion.`

`Do you think I do not know this?' I asked rhetorically.

Jade Emperor continued, `Although I dispensed this Divine Nail, the order was carried out according to divine rules.

There are altogether three thousand volumes of divine rules, and even the Great God of Nine Heavens must follow them.

Disobeying these rules causes one to descend through the ranks and hinders one from ascending again for thousands of eons.`

I did not want to argue with the Jade Emperor, so I waved good-bye and went to see Shakyamuni Buddha.

My Dharma Body has the ability to interpenetrate the Three Realms (Desire, Form, and Formlessness) and extend throughout the entire spiritual realm. It is therefore possible to arrive, in a thought, at the Great Thunder Sound Temple at Western Soul Mountain. The Dharma Body is originally boundless, subtle, formless, and untraceable.

Upon arriving at Western Soul Mountain, the temple guardians Wei-tuo and Jia-lan came to welcome me. Mahakasyapa and Ananda then walked down the steps to greet me. The eight great vajras stood on both sides, and I was greeted by Asvaghosa, Nagarjuna, Parsva, Sanakavasa, Kumarajiva, and Prajnatara, among others.

Shakyamuni Buddha sat on the eight-lions-vajra-throne and asked me, `Lian-sheng, from where have you come?`

`I have traveled hundreds of miles from the east.`

`How long did it take you?`

`A single thought.`

`Why have you come?`

`

I have come for Zheng Ke.`

`But the matter is so insignificant. Why have you done this? It doesn`t make any sense.`

`It is a small problem, but I made a great commitment and it now has infinite significance.`

Shakyamuni Buddha broke into a smile, `Now, Lian-sheng, you have become quite sharp-tongued since your incarnation into samsara. What may I do to help you?`

`Send an order to have the Divine Nail removed.`

The Buddha said, `The fundamental pathway of salvation through Buddhism is based on precepts. The rules are strict and fair. The great pathway of cultivation is not a chaotic one. Although the phenomenal worlds are dreams and bubbles, when one is deluded and does not understand the true Self Nature, one is still bound by the laws of karma. The seed of unwholesome actions will germinate into roots of misfortune.`

I replied, `Since one of the Buddhist precepts prohibits false speech, I must keep my promise and cure him. It will be a virtuous deed if this inspires faith in him. It may transform his fate.`

`Do you think you can do it?` asked the Buddha.

`I will do all I can.`

Shakyamuni Buddha thought to himself for a while and then said, `I have a solution. You must remember that when Mahamaudgalyayana wanted to save his mother from the realm of hells, he was not able to do it alone. He recruited a group of holy monks to help him. The combined power from the group accomplished the task. Now, the City God and Jade Emperor have been unable to help you, and I cannot change the rules either. Why don`t you try using the collective power of a group of people to remove Zheng Ke`s disaster?`

A light flashed through my mind and, in a moment, I knew the answer to my problem.

I bowed to Shakyamuni Buddha and walked three times around him before leaving the Great Thunder Sound Temple of Western Soul Mountain.

First, I drew nine energized talismans and burned them. This was to summon nine other people, in addition to myself, to help redeem Zheng Ke`s transgression.

One day, while playing basketball on the court behind the Ling Shen Ching Tze Temple in Redmond, the ball ran away, and I chased after it.

At the perimeter of the courtyard, where cement gave way to uneven, unpaved earth, I slipped and sprained my ankle. For one hundred days, I suffered and endured great pain from the sprained ankle and tendon. The strange thing was, during the three months while my ankle was healing, nine other people in the Ling Shen Ching Tze Temple in Redmond successively hurt their ankles. Altogether ten people, including me, hurt their feet.

Everyone found it strange. Someone asked, `Is this a superceding of karma?` I just smiled.

`How strange that ten people all hurt their feet within these few months!`

`It is indeed strange!` I concurred.

`What a coincidence that they all happened around the same time.`

`Yes, what a coincidence,` I said.

The ten people who sprained their ankles superseded on behalf of Zheng Ke. Zheng Ke's feet stopped hurting. He recovered and was able to walk again.

I taught Zheng Ke the following `Four Views of Uncleanliness`:

Lusts of mortal beings change from lifetime to lifetime. When born as women, they are attracted to men. When born as men, they fall in love with the bodies of women. If they become mindful of the four unclean conditions, they will not become so amorously deluded.

1) Uncleanliness upon waking up - Dwell silently on the filthy condition in which one wakes up early in the morning. The eyes are unfocused, the tongue is covered with a thick coating, and the mouth is filled with a stale breath. Even a rare beauty, before freshening up and applying make-up, awakes this way.

2) Uncleanliness upon over-drinking - Dwell silently on the filthy condition one is in when one drinks too much and throws up. The undigested vomit is so revolting, even a hungry dog is repulsed after sniffing it. Even for a beautiful woman, sipping wine and picking at her food, such will be the contents in her stomach when the dinner is finished.

3) Uncleanliness when sick - Dwell silently on the condition of sickness. The face is dark and sallow, the body emaciated, there may be ulcerative openings with foul smelling pus, and blood oozing from the wounds. Imagine how a beautiful or young woman will look when afflicted with such an illness.

4) Uncleanliness in the bowels - Dwell silently on toilets, where feces and urine pile up, with flies circling around. A person may be externally beautiful and covered with expensive perfume, yet such is the condition of the bowels after food and drink have been digested and absorbed.

I told Zheng Ke, `Once the thought of sexual desire arises, evil thoughts inevitably follow. Take for example, the fear of parting with a lover and the ensuing thoughts of possessiveness, jealousy, envy, tormented thought, and plans to harm and destroy. The latter two kinds of thought arise when one fails to obtain one`s desires.`

Zheng Ke nodded after listening to my advice.

I said to him, `One may find another man`s wife or daughter beautiful and harbor a sexual thought for her. But as soon as such a thought arises, even though it is never enacted, it will be hard to escape punishment from the spiritual realm.`

Zheng Ke said, `I shall remember that.`

Later, I learned that Zheng Ke had taken refuge in another ordained Buddhist master. I thought it was fine. Zheng Ke then donated a piece of property for this master to build a temple. I also thought this was fine. Zheng Ke helped this master publicize and disseminate the Buddhadharma. That was also very good.

However, news traveled back to me that, when Zheng Ke discussed the Buddhadharma in public, he would bring up my name in a not-so-friendly tone.

One time, I saw him from afar and waved to him. He lowered his head and walked briskly away, pretending not to have seen me.

I ran up and called out to him, `Zheng Ke!`

He turned around with a detached look on his face.

`How have you been?' I greeted him.

`Of course I am fine. Since I left you, everything has been completely fine.`

`Oh!' I was stunned.

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Don't you understand?' he asked harshly.

'I don't understand,' I was confused.

'A high adept Buddhist master told me you are an evil person and that you had put a black magic spell on me when I took refuge in you. That was why my feet became immobilized right afterwards. Then you used your black magic to allow me to walk again. It was all a trick to gain my faith and trust. Now I understand how you operate. You are a demon and an evil con man.'

'Oh! So that was what you think happened!' I lowered my head.

'That was the way it was.'

'I have nothing to say then.'

'Of course you have nothing to say!' Zheng Ke turned around and strode away.

Saddened, I asked myself, 'Have I been wrong in vowing not to forsake a single being?'

With a bleeding heart,

Lian-sheng was at a loss for words;

How can Zheng Ke be so mistaken?

The ship has arrived at the shore,

Yet passengers are hard to find;

What appears to be great affinity,

Turns out to be no affinity once again.

## Chapter 12: The Divine Fans

Mr. Yao Tong, an older student who was fifty years old, came to me one time for a consultation. Yao Tong had been married for thirty years, but he and his wife were childless.

‘Is it in our destiny to have children?’ Yao Tong asked me. ‘Master, you are a Living Buddha and have helped many people with their problems and illnesses. Please bless us and fulfill our wish.’

‘If it is in one’s destiny to have something, one will eventually get it. Otherwise, the situation should not be forced,’ I replied.

When Yao Tong heard this, he said calmly, ‘I know such things are, indeed, predestined and cannot be forced. But I just wish to find out whether or not it is in my fate to have any children.’

‘No,’ I replied.

Two years after the consultation, Yao Tong’s wife gave birth to a pair of beautiful twin boys. They had full foreheads, high-bridged noses, and thick earlobes. All who saw them commented on their fine features.

Yao Tong and his wife brought the twins to show me and wanted me to name them. I named them Yao Jing and Yao Xian.

Yao Tong said to me, ‘Master, for many years, we have had faith in your psychic powers of divination. That is why, after having these two sons, we came to you to have you name them for us. We have great respect in the Master’s reputation. However, two years ago, when I consulted you regarding whether or not we would have any children, your answer was no. Now we have these sons. Why have things turned out this way?’

Yao Tong was a straightforward person and I could not help but feel embarrassed about my previous forecast. How could my psychic divination have erred? Actually, Yao Tong had not blamed me. He had even brought the babies to me to name them, and he still had great reverence for me. He merely wanted to find out why the prior consultation was wrong. If such a thing had happened to another individual, that person might have shunned me, criticized and cursed me behind my back, or told everyone about the inaccuracy of my readings.

I said to him, ‘There must be a reason behind this. In fact, you look different from the last time I saw you. Today, you have a red light covering your crown, where, in the past, there were traces of black vapor. Something has changed.’

Yao Tong said, `I know Master is very good at observing people`s chi, but I also wish to find out the reason behind the birth of my sons.`

`Let me do some investigating, and I will get back to you,`

I said, my face reddening.

`Thank you!` said Yao Tong.

That night I had a dream. In the dream, I found myself arriving at a magnificent, ancient-looking temple. Upon my arrival, beating drums and gongs sounded, and two rows of ghosts and spirits prostrated before the temple.

The main diety of the temple, Duke Wei-ling, stood at the front door, and he brought his palms together in greeting.

I stopped, afraid to step forward.

Duke Wei-ling called out, `Please come inside, Lian-sheng. Why are you still standing outside the temple?`

`I don`t feel I have the virtues or abilities deserving of this welcome,` I replied, embarrassed.

`A lofty heart is a great virtue and trying one`s best indicates great ability.`

I walked into the temple and sat down at the guest table while Duke Wei-ling and the other spirits sat at the host`s and side tables respectively. Immediately, food and liquor were served. Although the food at this banquet could not compare with the delicacies found in the realms of devas, it was still very good. The liquor was smooth yet strong and, after one sip, my whole face turned red.

Duke Wei-ling laughed, `I used to have two divine fan attendants. On hot days, with one wave of their fans, all heat would disappear. If they waved twice, the weather would turn chilly. Three waves of their fans would send frost and snow hailing from above.`

`That sounds like the plantain leaf fan from Journey to the West,` I said.

`Not quite the same, but almost.`

`Where are your two divine fan attendants now?` I asked Duke Wei-ling.

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They have been reborn into the human world.`

`To which family have they been reborn?`

`Into the home of Yao Tong.`

When I heard Yao Tong`s name, I was shocked. Just as I was wondering how I would find an answer to my puzzle, the answer popped up quite by chance.

`But according to his life reading, Yao Tong was not supposed to have any sons!` I remarked. `Why were the divine fan attendants born into his family?`

`It is true that his life reading held no sons,` Duke Wei-ling concurred. `Yao Tong has visited my temple and prayed to me many times. And, though he was very sincere, I saw the trace of black chi upon his face and did not grant him his wish. However, I later received an edict from the Jade Emperor, ordering me to give him the divine fan attendants as sons so he would have a line of illustrious descendents.`

`He must have undergone some transformative experiences in his life. What exactly happened?`

Duke Wei-ling answered, `I don`t know the details of the story but, what I do know, is that Yao Tong saved the life of a woman named Wu Yan and also maintained his integrity by rejecting a sexual liaison offered to him. Because of these honorable actions, he was blessed with two more years added to his life, enlistment into officialdom, and the birth of his two sons. In the future, these two sons will rise head and shoulders above others and enjoy great fortunes. In fact, when Yao Tong visited my temple after the birth of his two sons, I saw that his facial features, chi, and complexion had improved. I also saw a reddish halo above his head.`

`So, that was what happened,` I said to myself.

Afterwards, Duke Wei-ling and I had a pleasant talk.

Later, when I again met with Yao Tong, I discussed with him the transforming of his fate and told him that his two sons were the incarnations of the divine fan attendants.

Yao Tong then related to me a dream he had had the night before his sons were born. `In my dream, I saw thousands of auspicious, beaming lights above the roof of my house. From the sky, two fans descended. They were not ordinary fans. They looked antique, and were covered with very intricate and elaborate designs. I could see the patterns very clearly. When the dream was over, the babies were born. It was such a strange dream that, until now, I had not dared to share it with anyone.`

`Also, there was the incident regarding Wu Yan.`

`You know about that as well?`

`Please tell me the details.`

Thus Yao Tong proceeded to tell me the following true story of his encounter with Wu Yan.

One night, while strolling along the riverbank, Yao Tong saw a young woman standing for a long time by the side of the river. Yao Tong watched as the woman slowly started walking towards the middle of the river. She had soon walked so far that her head was no longer above water.

It was late at night, and no one else was around. After calling out several times for help and receiving no response, Yao Tong ran into the water to save the girl. Luckily Yao Tong had been a frogman in the navy when he was young. He loved swimming and had received training as a lifeguard, so in no time, he rescued the young woman and brought her safely to shore.

The woman was Wu Yan. When Yao Tong asked her why she had tried to drown herself, she told him that because of her naive ? she had been swindled by a group of con artists and gambled away three million Taiwanese dollars. The debt collectors had been pressing her daily to pay the money. Afraid of being reprimanded by her family, and with no means to pay off her debt, she had decided to kill herself. When Yao Tong heard her story, his compassion was aroused. He decided to help her and pay off her debt. Wu Yan was extremely grateful to Yao Tong. Not only had he saved her life, but he had also paid off her entire gambling debt. It was as if he had given her a new life. When she learned that Yao Tong had no descendants, she willingly offered herself to him as a concubine to bear him sons.

Yao Tong`s wife saw that Wu Yan was young and quite pretty. Although she had made a mistake in her life, the girl seemed like a kind person, and so she also agreed that Yao Tong should take her in as a second wife. If Wu Yan could bear her husband a son, she would accept it as part of a divine plan.

But Yao Tong felt differently about the matter. To him, such a proposal was immoral because it meant he would be taking advantage of someone in a crisis. He had acted out of good intentions, and to culminate the incident in lust and an improper sexual liaison seemed to him a breach of honor. Also, he felt that the difference in their age would render the whole affair quite unethical, so he solemnly rejected the offer. He would rather have no sons than risk such a sexual transgression.

Wu Yan and Yao Tong's wife tried many times to persuade him to change his mind, but Yao Tong steadfastly refused.

Soon afterwards, Yao Tong's wife actually found herself pregnant, and a medical examination showed that she would have twins.

As stated in these verses:

What a wonderful change in one's fate;

Fortune comes hand in hand with auspiciousness;

Saving another's life and abstaining from lust are true virtues;

Lucky stars will appear and life will sail smoothly.

Yao Tong once related the conversations he had with me to a Buddhist monk. The Buddhist monk said to him, "If you had remained childless, Sheng-yen Lu would have claimed his reading to be accurate. If your wife gave birth to a son, Shengyen Lu would tell you his divination was still correct, but that something had happened to change your fate. Either way, his divination would be correct. I don't see how you can still trust spiritual divinations, or Sheng-yen Lu for that matter."

Yao Tong replied, "The Buddhist sutras have said that in this world, there are fixed as well as unfixed dharmas. All phenomena are impermanent, and everything undergoes change. The Buddha himself did not say that one's destiny is fixed, and he believed that fate could be changed. Thus there are practices one can study to establish a new life. The purpose of spiritual divination is primarily to teach people to act properly and avoid disasters in their lives. It is based on good intentions. What has happened to me is karma. Causes in previous lives had shaped a destiny of no children in this lifetime, but actions in this life resulted in a change of luck. As a result of luck enhancement, I now have two sons."

The Buddhist monk asked, "How can one tell if Sheng-yen Lu really is capable of spiritual divination, or if he was just making it all up?"

Yao Tong replied, `He knew about the incident with Wu Y an.`

`Perhaps he had made investigations into your affairs and found that out.`

Yao Tong made no reply.

The Buddhist monk remarked determinedly, `Sheng-yen Lu is evil, and he is also a heretic.`

Yao Tong replied, `The Living Buddha has taught us that observation of the five precepts and ten wholesome actions is virtuous. Conversely, breaking the five precepts and ten wholesome deeds is evil. The Buddhist scriptures have said that the world abounds in heretics. In fact, seeking dharma beyond one`s heart is a transgression. The Living Buddha has taught us that practicing Buddhism is to cultivate the Buddha Mind to transcend birth and death and realize one`s true nature!`

When the Buddhist monk heard this, he could not disagree. Yet he still argued, `I have heard that he swindles people out of their money!`

Yao Tong replied, `In his whole life, the Living Buddha has never stipulated a fee for anything. He allows people to pay whatever they like, so how can that be considered swindling? In fact, he never even wanted ownership of any of the True Buddha School temples.`

The Buddhist monk was silent for a moment. Then he came up with another accusation, `I have heard that he takes sexual advantage of female students.`

`Have you witnessed any of this?` asked Yao Tong.

`No, but I have heard such accusations from other people,` was the monk`s response.

Yao Tong remarked, `I have known Living Buddha Shengyen Lu for many years and spent quite a bit of time with him. He spends his days writing, painting, and meditating. He does his practice every day without fail and, to date, he has published one hundred and forty books. At times, he will put aside part of his day to help others resolve their problems and crises. He truly demonstrates earnest compassion for people of this world. He abides in the nature of the mind, and his actions are in keeping with his words. There are not that many people like him in the world. Take, for example, his allowing others to pay him whatever they like. People outside of the school may have no knowledge of this, but anyone who has had any contact with him will know this is true. So, the rumors that claim he swindles money are great injustices. Although there is much outside slandering, the Living Buddha has always remained unperturbed.

He has only instructed us to do the following two things. First, do not argue. Instead use disagreements as opportunities to practice `the art of perfecting patience and endurance.` Second, regard a negative encounter as an opportunity to resolve one`s karmic hindrance. For thirty years, he has learned from the tormenting of slanderers to become as expansive as the heavens and the earth. This virtue has earned him a great deal of respect from the realm of spirits.`

The Buddhist monk was silent.

Yao Tong came back to tell me of his encounter with the Buddhist monk. I, in turn, was silent.

I thought to myself, `I have devoted this entire life to the study and practice of Buddhism and the cultivation of the Tao. I have discovered that the most important goal in life is the transcending of birth and death. Anything else is auxiliary. I have always ignored outside rumors and slanders. To achieve liberation, I have steadfastly studied and practiced the Tantric Dharma in seclusion. Now that I have finally attained Enlightenment and transcended the six realms of transmigration, I can commune with Buddhas in all times and space. My original intent was to completely reveal the secrets of the workings of the divine, but I was afraid that evil people would obtain this knowledge and use it maliciously.

`The teachings of the Buddhadharma are inexhaustible. What I have attained is so real and practical, yet people of the world do not recognize this. How can I awaken all these people from their dreams? When I tell them the truth, they cannot recognize it and mistake it to be false.

`My master once told me that there are only three options for a truly enlightened being. The first is to immediately enter nirvana. The second is to live as a mountain hermit. The third is to pretend that one is a lunatic. He made this comment because the survival rate of an enlightened being is not high, and one will eventually be persecuted to death by others.`

Yet, I am someone who cannot bear to see the fallen people of this world rolling and suffering amidst a world of red dust and bitter seas. So the best way for me to transmit my teachings is by writing books, day after day, year after year. I shall be waiting on the other shore!

As for the circulating rumors, just let them be !

### Chapter 13: The Woman from the Grave

One night, my soul traveled out of my body and roamed throughout the universe of ten Dharma Realms.

There are worlds beyond worlds within the Empty Space;

Through realization of Tao, one becomes a high immortal;

At this point, ten thousand of rolls of scriptures are useless,

And the mind alone is the fountain of birth and death.

I arrived at a city in the realm of the netherworlds. The streets were densely populated with shops selling numerous commodities and mobile carts selling hot foods. Peddlers hawking their wares lined the streets. The city bustled with activity. Strolling along the main street, I looked at my surroundings which, to my surprise, reminded me of a busy district in the eastern part of Taipei.

I had been wandering around for a while, when I noticed a pretty, young woman walking towards me. She had been walking with her head lowered but, when she raised her head and spotted me, she gave a cry. Her surprised cry did not bother me at first. After all, my roaming around this city was a rather peculiar sight. This city was in the domain of ghosts, and the bodies of ghosts emitted only very faint light, if any at all. My body, on the other hand, was giving off a very strong, rainbow-like light, and many people in the city had turned their heads to look at me.

I therefore did not pay any particular attention to the young woman's cry until she suddenly stopped and called out to me, 'Sheng-yen Lu!'

'Oh!' I thought to myself. 'Someone in this domain actually recognizes me.'

'Do you know me?' I asked her.

'Of course. I have been a faithful reader of your books for many years. I have collected and read most of your writings.'

'What is your name?'

'Xie Qi.'

'That is a very pretty name. It befits you.'

‘Thank you!’ Xie Qi was very happy and spoke without hesitation. ‘It is just too wonderful to run into you here. My opportunity to get out of this place has finally come!’

‘I can’t take you away from here,’ I said to her, taken aback. ‘It is not possible for me to bring you to another realm for no reason at all.’

‘You will help me though, won’t you?’

‘I will help you, but I can’t keep a female ghost by my side.’

‘Of course not,’ Xie Qi continued, ‘But when the time comes, please greatly empower and bless me!’

‘How do you know I will be able to help you?’

‘Ghosts also have five kinds of transcendental powers,’ Xie Qi said breaking into a big smile like a rose in full bloom.

We walked to a nearby cafe for a drink. Xie Qi ordered an espresso.

I shook my head and said, ‘I don’t drink coffee. It makes it hard for me to sleep.’

‘They have decaffeinated coffee here.’

‘Oh! So cities in the netherworlds have caught up with the human world and have decaffeinated coffee too. In that case, I will have a decaffeinated cappuccino.’

I had a nice chat with Xie Qi. When I asked her how she had died, her face suddenly turned grim and she said,

‘Taking a concubine to continue the line,

A man pursues younger women;

Under powdered and rouged faces lie the white skeletons;

It is all just a dream;

I have seen too many rich men

Rampantly indulging their lust;

They ignore their wives

At the risk of losing their lives.`

`Were you someone`s concubine?`

`Yes.`

`It is not all that bad to be a concubine, since husbands usually love and care for their concubines more than for their wives!` I said.

Xie Qi said with a sigh, `But following one concubine is another, and it is not uncommon for these rich men to have four or five concubines.`

`That is true.`

`That is the way it is with rich men!` Xie Qi said.

`What happened to you then?`

`I jumped off a building.`

`You committed suicide by jumping off a building?`

`Yes,` Xie Qi said. `I did it in a moment of impulsive rage.`

`Haven`t my books explained that one should not commit suicide?`

`When I became swept up in the moment of rage, my mind blanked, and I did not recall your teachings.`

`You seem to be doing quite well in this city.`

‘Sheng-yen Lu, are you pretending you don’t really know what goes on here? A person who has committed suicide re-experiences the death again day after day. At 1:45 a.m., or on the first and fifteenth of every month, I relive the same excruciating pain and suffering. This city is just a fade. All the ghosts here are suffering from terrible pain within.’

‘Oh!’ I gasped with astonishment.

‘You must help me leave this place,’ Xie Qi said.

I nodded.

One day, a nicely dressed gentleman by the name of Chen De paid me a visit. After coming into the room, he took off the jacket of his well-ironed suit and loosened his tie and collar. I took a look and saw a lemon-sized lump on his neck.

‘It is malignant,’ said Chen De.

‘Are you going to have surgery?’

‘That had been the initial plan, but the lump is so big that part of it has wrapped around some nerves, which makes surgery difficult. Chemotherapy is an alternative, but it will cause loss of hair, the rupturing of capillaries, and weight loss.’

The doctors are now trying to determine the best way to go about treating the growth.’

‘Let me meditate on it and help you take a look at this malignant tumor.’

‘Please.’

I closed my eyes and focused my mind. Entering into a deep meditation, I became aware of many things of which one normally has no knowledge. With true knowledge, one can seek stillness amid movement or movement amid stillness. In this ‘subconscious’ state, I became aware of other worlds.

Many have heard the question, ‘Which came first—the chicken or the egg?’ There is no easy answer to this question. A chicken hatches from an egg, so it might seem that the egg should have come first. Yet, eggs are laid by chickens, so it seems that the chicken should have preceded the egg. With no chicken, from where did the egg come? With no egg, from where did the chicken come?

People have argued this question back and forth without arriving at any final conclusions. But, people who practice meditation know-

- 1) At the primeval state of the universe, there was no chicken or egg.
- 2) At the first separation of clear and turbid chi, the clear chi was like the egg white and the turbid chi like the egg yolk. The clear chi ascended to become the heavens, and the turbid chi descended to become the earth.
- 3) From Wu Chi, Tai Chi was born. With interactions between heaven and earth, yang and yin, the two chi's took on a spiritual dimension.
- 4) Tai Chi giving rise to the Two Forms was like the egg giving rise to the chicken.

Thus someone who practices meditation will give the following answer to the classic question, `First came the egg, then the chicken.`

With an understanding of these cosmic processes, one becomes aware of the universe's many secrets.

I, Living Buddha Lian-sheng Sheng-yen Lu, understand these processes, and I was therefore able to look into the malignant tumor to find some answers.

In my vision, the malignant tumor began rupturing layer by layer. Hidden under its innermost layer, I saw a spirit's light. A ghost was resting in there. The ghost looked quite familiar and, when I took a closer look, I saw Xie Qi.

`Why are you resting here?' I asked. `If the surgeon removes the malignant tumor, where will you go?`

`I will spread out to other parts of his body.`

`What if he undergoes chemotherapy?`

`I will turn into the Empty Space.`

`Xie Qi, do not argue with me. You know you do not have the ability to merge in with the Empty Space. You will only go back to the city in the netherworld,` I said to her.

`That is true. So I am now asking you to help liberate me.`

`

You must have become crazy with all this talk of liberation. How could you have entered the body of Chen De for no reason at all? You have caused a malignant tumor on his neck!

Xie Qi replied, 'I did not do this for no reason at all. He brought it on himself. There is a karmic cause behind this.'

'What was the situation?'

'Ask Chen De himself!'

So I emerged from my meditation and opened my eyes. I told Chen De that a grieving ghost by the name of Xie Qi resided inside the malignant tumor on his neck. I also relayed to him Xie Qi's claim that karmic causes had led her to stay inside the tumor.

When Chen De heard this, he was greatly shocked. He then told me of the following incident.

During the year's Pure Brightness Festival, Chen De had gone with his family to visit the grave of one of his ancestors. After pulling the weeds and pruning the wildly grown vines around the grave, they set up an offering table with vegetarian foods, fruits, as well as some favorite snacks enjoyed by the ancestor when he had been alive. They lit incense, and everyone bowed to pay their respects and offer prayers. After this, they offered the burning of spirit money.

There are great differences between the Chinese and Western ways of cemetery rituals. The Chinese offer food, incense, and spirit money while westerners offer flowers to their ancestors. In the past, westerners have derided the Chinese for their food offerings and asked if buried people climbed out of their graves to eat the food. Similarly, Chinese have responded by asking if people in the graves climbed out to admire the flowers.

Whether his ancestor climbed out of the grave to eat the food or not, Chen De had no idea. When his family had been making the offerings, he had become bored and started wandering around to other gravesites. He had spotted a new grave about thirty meters to his right and walked over to take a look. On the tombstone were the newly engraved words, 'Here lies our beloved daughter Xie Qi.'

Chen De thought to himself that it was probably a young lady whose funeral had been taken care of by her parents. He then noticed a photograph on the tombstone. Moving forward to get a closer look, he saw the image of a beautiful young woman with large eyes and delicate features. There was a natural grace and charm about her, and, in an instant, Chen De was mesmerized. He exclaimed aloud, 'What a pity!'

Unintentionally Chen De brought his palms together and murmured to himself, `When I get married, I hope to find someone as beautiful as the woman in this grave.`

Chen De then retrieved his camera and took a picture of Xie Qi's photograph on the tombstone. After the picture was developed, he carried it in his wallet. `How wonderful it would be to marry someone as beautiful as Xie Qi,` he thought to himself.

I found Chen De's story quite incredible. `Did you really do that?` I asked.

`Yes.`

Chen De took a picture out from his wallet. It was indeed Xie Qi.

`I find it incredible that you became so bedazzled by her beauty that you would do such a thing! No wonder you are being entwined by a grieving ghost.`

`What can I do now?` Chen De asked alarmed and perplexed.

I told him I would have to employ two methods. The first method would be to set up a shrine and chant sutras and mantras to deliver the spirit of Xie Qi. The power of sutras and mantras would carry her soul to be reborn into a beautiful place.

The second method would be the Golden Well Practice. I would take a special brush, dip it in cinnabar, draw a dot on the tumor and chant, `With one line, a river is created. With a second line, another river is created. With the third and fourth lines, a golden well is created. This is no ordinary brush but one from the scholar of Lu. Pointed to the sky, the sky becomes clear. Pointed to the earth, the earth quiets down. Pointed to a human, one's life is extended. Pointed at a ghost, the ghost will be reborn to a better realm. Ji-ji-ru-lu-ling.`

I changed the lines from the original incantation of the Golden Well Practice `pointed at a ghost, the ghost will be extinguished` to `pointed at a ghost, the ghost will be reborn to a better realm.`

I asked Chen De to come back and see me several more times. The Golden Well Practice has tremendous power. After putting the first dot of cinnabar on the tumor, the tumor shrank considerably in size. After the second time, it became even smaller. After seven times, the tumor shrank to the size of a pearl. After employing this Golden Well Practice a total of ten times, the tumor was completely gone.

The magic brush brings fear to yin spirits,

In a trance, the spirit flies over three realms;

With the secret practice of Golden Well,

In one thunderclap, one is liberated from the bitter seas.

If Chen De had not found me, perhaps he would have undergone surgery and chemotherapy. An initially healthy person would have been tormented until he was half-dead. If he could survive all the treatments and become well later, that would still be fine. But if the treatments could not cure him, then what a dreadful life he would have been left with!

Chen De wanted to give me his picture of Xie Qi. `Will it still hurt me now?` he asked apprehensively.

`You can keep it as a memento,` I said with a laugh. `It is fine now.`

Chen De`s case is not that unique. I have actually encountered quite a few examples of cases like his.

In one incident, when a man`s neighbor, a young woman whom he had known fairly well, passed away, he could not help feeling attached to her on the day of her funeral. That same night, he came down with fever and chills and saw in a trance the young woman coming to him.

Ever since, every afternoon at 4:00 p.m., he would feel a draft of cold air and a chill running through his body, and he would feel the presence of the visiting woman.

Gradually, this man felt himself becoming physically and mentally weaker. He would often awake in fright in the middle the night, his body covered in a cold sweat. Doctors treated him as if he had the flu.

When he came to my place, I took one look and knew it was a case of `noxious chi assault.` There are only two solutions for such assaults. One can either dismiss the source of noxious chi (the spirit) or set up a protective boundary around one`s house, around one`s bedroom, or around the person involved in the spirit disturbance.

I have dedicated much time to studying the problem of `noxious chi assaults.` This is a phenomenon some people are more susceptible to than others.

In general, susceptibility is influenced by one's ba-zi (the year, month, day, and hour of one's birth). From the ba-zi, one can determine whether one has an abundance or a deficit of yang chi. People with low yang chi are more vulnerable to noxious chi assaults than those with greater yang chi.

To my knowledge, people who are born in the second or eleventh lunar months experience higher rates of `noxious chi assault.` If an afflicted person does not seek treatment immediately, over time, he or she will suffer a mental breakdown, start to speak incoherently, and `hallucinate` and see ghosts or gods. Such auditory and visual hallucinations are often referred to medically as symptoms of grandiose delusion or schizophrenia. From a spiritual perspective, the person is actually suffering a noxious chi assault or spiritual possession.

In another case, a woman had been afflicted for many years with a soreness in her arm. She had sought help from many doctors trained in western as well as traditional Chinese medicine, and she had tried all kinds of medicines-pills, ointments, patches, injections, acupuncture-all to no avail. Finally, she came to see me. I went into meditation to observe and found entwined around her arm the spirit of a man. That the soreness in her arm had been caused by noxious chi assault had even taken me by surprise. I then learned that the man was a boyfriend of hers who had drowned in the ocean many years ago. At the time of the tragedy, this lady had been extremely sad and distraught. After doing some computation, she traced the onset of the pain to the time he fell into the ocean. I was able to help her and cure her arm soreness and noxious chi assault. Many who knew of the case found it inconceivable that a chronic illness, untreatable by medical doctors for so many years, was finally resolved through spiritual means.

In a third case, I came across a woman very vulnerable to noxious chi assaults. The mere encounter of a funeral procession on the street would bring her bad luck. Immediately after arriving home, she would feel dizzy and nauseated, lose her appetite, find it difficult to sleep, and come down with sudden fever and chills. She would often lose her mental concentration. For example, when she picked up a knife to cut some vegetables, she would accidentally cut herself. When she went out, she would often lose her balance and trip or injure herself. In a nutshell, she constantly encountered bad luck wherever she went.

Some might argue that her problems were psychological. At first I, too, had entertained this idea. But one day she came to see me with a high fever and deeply sunken eyes surrounded by two dark circles. Directly behind, I could see a group of spirits following her. It was at that point that I realized hers was, indeed, a case of noxious chi attack.

In this particular case, the problem of noxious chi attack was not easily resolved. Though I resolved the problem for her the first time, she was affected repeatedly. I finally taught her to chant the Vajra Mantra of Achala and asked her to enshrine the statue of Achala at home.

She devoted herself sincerely to doing the Achala Practice and forming the Achala Mudra.

Whenever she had to attend a funeral or encounter a funeral procession, she would form the mudra and chant the mantra three times to invoke Achala's protection. Ever since, she has been able to resume a normal life.

Therefore, I often recommend that people who are vulnerable to noxious chi attack, those predisposed by their ba-zi to have high yin chi in their bodies, practice Vajra mantra recitation, enshrine Vajra deities, and do the Vajra Deity practices. These are very important Tantric practices one may employ to protect oneself.

Although noxious chi attacks are brought about by external assaults from spirits, my view is that this problem is still basically a problem of the mind. This problem of the mind is rooted in one's intents and desires. Although one's intents and desires may be invisible to other humans, they are readily detected by ghosts and spirits. This leads to the occurrence of noxious chi assaults!

I once traveled through the realm of hells to the Hell of Feng-du. From that visit, I came to a profound realization: the majority of people who ascend to the twenty-eight heavens to enjoy their rewards are those who are pure in mind and have scant desires. On the other hand, the majority of those who descend to the Hell of Feng-du are those with strong desires and lusts.

In the Hell of Feng-du, I saw the horrendous amounts of karmic transgressions committed by humans; they were as tall as a mountain and as deep as the sea. The evils committed by men-murders, kidnappings, robbery, arson, theft, etc.-are numerous, but the one evil that tops these in prevalence is sexual misconduct. Human beings commit sexual misconducts casually and frequently.

According to the teachings of karma and transnigrations:

People who rape others' wives or daughters will suffer five hundred kalpas in the Hell of Feng-du before attaining rebirth. They will then be reborn as animals, such as donkeys, horses, or cows, for another five hundred kalpas before attaining rebirth as humans. When they recapture their human bodies, they often become prostitutes.

People who rape widows, nuns, or spiritual practitioners will suffer eight hundred kalpas in the Hell of Feng-du before attaining rebirth. They will then be reborn as sheep and pigs to be slaughtered by humans. After eight hundred kalpas in the animal realm, they can then re-attain human birth. However, they will not be born in high or noble form, but as a blind, a mute, or with other deformities.

People who commit incest-such as father with daughter, mother with son, or one sibling with another-and people who break the ethics-such as an old person with a young person, a man with man, or a woman with woman-will suffer fifteen hundred kalpas in the realms of hell before attaining rebirth. They will then be reborn as snakes or rats. Only after another fifteen hundred kalpas can they recover human births. The recovered human lives are not very long, and they will die either in gestation or infancy and not be able to enjoy old age.

Also, those who fabricate pornographic materials that debauch and corrupt others` minds will suffer even more severely. After dying, they will descend to the Interminable Hell from where it is quite difficult to be released. Only when all the pornographic materials produced by one have disappeared, can one depart.

As stated earlier, the harms produced by pornographic materials are incalculable. A woman from a good family can, through a chance meeting with such materials, become seduced and be unable to suppress the fire of lust thus aroused. A virtuous woman may become loose and wanton. These materials may fan the fires and lusts of a young man or woman who may then become addicted to the habit of masturbation. When young people over-indulge in masturbation, their physical health also suffers. The harm done is relatively minor when purveyors of such material hurt only themselves. But, when they start involving and ruining others` ethics and lives, the negative results will be magnified. My opinion is that pornographic materials create and result in endless karmic hindrances.

I am aware that, within the ocean of karma, sexual desires are the most difficult to extinguish. Desires for `money, fame, food, and sleep` are hard to control, but the desire for sex is the most difficult to handle. In this world of samsara, where there are frequent interactions between men and women, temptations for sexual misconduct abound.

I have seen heroes with great accomplishments succumb to sexual temptations and stoop to bestiality. Some very fine and talented people, aroused by lust, have fallen and ruined their reputations. From ancient times until now, such transgressions have befallen men from all walks of life, the holy and foolish alike.

The modern world of today is even more challenging than the past. Consumed by the winds of lust and influenced by numerous sex industries, young, middle-aged, and even old people harbor frivolous and unrestrained thoughts. The moral principles once honored in the past are no longer held in the same regard. Hedonism and sexual innuendos have become socially acceptable, and today`s society constantly bombards one with a barrage of sexual images. When mind and reason become subordinate to body and passion, it is easy for one to fall, becoming a denizen of the bitter hells of suffering. One should know that the retribution for licentiousness and sexual misconduct is severe!

Karmic effects include the following:

- 1) retribution upon one`s wife and daughters
- 2) loss of fame and reputation
- 3) punishment upon one`s descendents
- 4) loss of fortune
- 5) decrease in rank
- 6) shortened lifespan
- 7) punishment in the realm of hells
- 8) descent into the hell, hungry ghosts, and animal realms

As practitioners, we must look past the illusions of physical beauty and realize that `form is emptiness.` Under the rosy and powdered skin are bones, blood, flesh, and foul-smelling excrement.

Be very careful and beware of making a slip! One must break through the delusions to return to the path of realization.

## Chapter 14: The Gatekeepers of the Southern Heaven Gate

The ninth day of the first lunar month was the Jade Emperor's birthday. That day, I traveled with other deities to the Ling-xiao Jewel Palace for the big celebration.

To reach this metropolis of the gods, we had to pass through the southern gate which was typically guarded. On this occasion, however, the gatekeepers were not the four deva-kings, four heavenly lords, or the four spirit generals. They were Pagoda Lord Li Jing and his sons Jin-zha, Mu-zha, and Na-zha. Everyone's name had to be checked against a list before one was allowed admittance.

This verification of names did not bother me, yet the line was quite long and the process seemed to be taking a fair amount of time.

In principle,

The expansive Ten Dharma Realms

Are but the tapering end of a soft hair in my hand;

There are countless ways to enter through Emptiness;

Waiting in line is just a waste of time.

Yet, because all the other deities were waiting in line, I did not want to stand out like a camel amongst a group of sheep, and I decided to wait in line as well.

The gods all had their invitation cards with them. I, however, had come on my own. Finally, after a long wait, I reached the gate.

Because I appeared in human form and not as a god, Pagoda Lord Li Jing was startled to see me. 'Who are you?' he asked.

'I am in the human realm now,' I replied.

'Do you have an invitation?'

'I have the Inherent Nature.'

As soon as the Pagoda Lord heard mention of the Inherent Nature, he became alert and asked, 'What is this Inherent Nature?'

`It is in one who discovers the spiritual light.`

`Where does this spiritual light reside now?`

`It rests inside a refuge place.`

`And where is this refuge place?`

`It can be found chanting the True Buddha Sutra at the Seamless Jewel Pagoda.`

As soon as Li Jing, Jin-zha, Mu-zha, and Na-zha heard the mentioning of the True Buddha Sutra, it suddenly dawned on them who I was.

`Oh, so it is you, Living Buddha Lian-sheng Sheng-yen Lu.` The four gatekeepers at the southern gate joined their palms and bowed.

All the other gods present were extremely surprised. In a flash, I transformed into the Light Body, filling the great Empty Space.

While sleeping in a thatched hut on earth,

I soar past oceans and skies in an instant;

Wherever I sit, it is always pure and bright;

When I travel, I penetrate all spaces.

The gatekeepers at the southern gate knew the human being before them was an inconceivable, rare being in samsara.

Only a Buddha recognizes a Buddha. How can sentient beings in samsara really know Living Buddha Lian-sheng Sheng-yen Lu? If they knew his true nature, would they curse him and consider him a demon, a man who schemes for sex, a devil, a con man, or a lunatic?

Who is Living Buddha Lian-sheng Sheng-yen Lu after all?

-A drop of spiritual light from the Western Pure Land, Exploding in a thunderclap in the skies above the Southern Gate.

Let us resume our story. As the gods filed in line, a dragon king by the name of Wellspring approached the gate clutching an invitation in his hand.

Just as the gatekeepers were about to invite Wellspring Dragon King inside, a loud voice boomed from the sky, `Can a lustful criminal be admitted through the Southern Heaven Gate?`

Greatly frightened, Wellspring Dragon King pleaded, `I am innocent, I am innocent.`

`How dare you deny it?` A Divine Eye appeared in the sky.

`Oh! The lightning-like Divine Eye sees everything,` the gods spoke in awe.

Perspiring heavily, Wellspring Dragon King bent over on the ground, afraid to rise.

The jeweled pagoda held by Pagoda Lord Li Jing emitted a beam of golden light sucking up Wellspring Dragon King and transporting him into the pagoda. After some time passed, the jeweled pagoda spat out Wellspring Dragon King, crushing him to smithereens!

The gods began discussing amongst themselves the events that had brought the dragon king to his present state. Wellspring Dragon King had come from a Dragon King Temple in a certain coastal town where he had been enshrined in one of the temple's side halls. Enshrined in the main hall of this temple were the four dragon kings from the eastern, southern, western, and northern seas respectively. This was a very busy temple with many worshippers.

In a nearby village lived a very pretty, young woman who often came to work at the Dragon King Temple as a volunteer.

One day, the village girl came to Wellspring Dragon King to ask for guidance on whom to pick from among her suitors as her future husband. That day, she happened to be dressed in a new, attractive outfit. Her face was creamy and pink, and her lips were luscious and cherry-red.

After several trials with the divination blocks, she was still unable to obtain a definitive answer. Finally, with her mind whirling in turmoil, she raised her head to look at the statue of Wellspring Dragon King. The statue was a vivid sculpture of a handsome man. This village girl said to herself, `How perfect it would be if there was someone like this Wellspring Dragon King to be my husband!`

From the shrine above, Wellspring Dragon King heard her words and took a look at the girl below. In an instant, he was transfixed.

How could anyone resist her look, her voice, and her laughter? Wellspring Dragon King began mentally undressing the young woman as a series of erotic images flashed through his mind. The young woman's remark had stirred a yearning in him.

From that day on, when the village girl fell asleep at night, the Dragon King would visit her in her dreams. During these visits, they engaged in conjugal acts as if they were married.

The Dragon King had forgotten the rules by which gods must abide: 1) maintaining purity of mind; 2) observing the divine laws; 3) preserving one's `chi and shen`; 4) protecting the citizens of one's domain; 5) abstaining from filthy conduct; 6) maintaining a diligent and energetic demeanor.

Wellspring Dragon King's intrusions into the young woman's dreams and his assaults upon her were transgressions of sexual misconduct. In the universe, gods and men must follow the laws inherited by each class upon conception. A god who breaks these laws risks losing his godhood. A non-virtuous act, such as debauchery, can result in the extinction of divine light, and send one falling into the realms of hells, animals, and hungry ghosts. These laws govern all gods from those of the highest rank down to the kitchen gods.

Wellspring Dragon King was unable to escape the observation of the Divine Eye. Disobeying the divine law resulted in a severe punishment for his crime. He was pulverized and sent to wander the netherworld as a ghost. Not only had he betrayed and thrown away the godhood he had inherited from previous generations, but he also brought dishonor upon his family's name. Will there be peace in his mind?

Incorporated in the pictogram for the word `sex` is the pictogram for `knife,` a tool that can take away one's life.

Lusting for finite pleasures while alive will lead to infinite suffering after death.

I later had an opportunity to visit the Dragon King Temple in that coastal town. The temple was magnificently built and enjoyed a great reputation in the area.

When I walked over to the side hall, I noticed that Wellspring Dragon King's shrine was empty. The words `Wellspring Dragon King` appeared above the shrine, but there was no statue.

I asked the abbot of the temple about it.

`Something strange happened in this side hall!` he said.

‘Oh? What happened?’ I asked, pretending I knew nothing about it.

‘Last year on the ninth of the first lunar month, the statue suddenly fell down on its own. It dropped to the floor and broke into pieces. It happened when the temple had not yet opened, and no one had been around, It was very strange.’

‘Oh!’

The abbot continued, ‘When I saw that the statue had broken into pieces, I had the place cleaned up. I had planned to purchase another statue or have another sculpture made.’

‘What happened?’

‘That same night, I dreamt the Dragon Kings of the Four Seas had come to tell me that Wellspring Dragon King had broken a divine law and lost his godhood. There would be no need for me to replace the statue in the shrine. I did not take the dream seriously at first. I consulted the divination blocks, and they confirmed the dream. Yet I still did not believe it and went to the sculpture studio to request another statue of Wellspring Dragon King.

Strangely, whenever the sculptor prepared to begin work on the statue for Wellspring Dragon King, he would get sick. When he recovered and again tried to work on the project, he would become sick again. Now, this sculptor is refusing to work at all on Wellspring Dragon King’s statue.’

‘How strange. What happened in the end?’ I was curious.

‘That is all. There was nothing more to it,’ the abbot pointed at the empty shrine.

Just as I was about to leave, the abbot suddenly ran after me, ‘Another strange thing has happened around here. In a small village nearby, a young woman has suddenly developed psychic power. She claims to have the divine sight and can read past and future lives for others. When people asked her how she attained the power, she initially refused to say. Later she said Wellspring Dragon King had taught her. She is very accurate in her readings. You can go and look her up.’

I followed the directions given by the abbot and looked up the village girl. As soon as I laid my eyes on her, I saw upon her body the presence of chi from Wellspring Dragon King.

Typically, when the energy from a god enters the body of an ordinary human being, the latter will develop some unusual abilities. By employing this energy, the village girl was able to make some pretty accurate predictions.

For example, if a pregnant lady came to see her, she could accurately foretell the sex of the baby. This one ability alone had made her quite famous.

I sat before the village girl and waited for her to give me a reading of my past and future lives.

After observing me for a while, she made a surprised sound and shook her head. Then she nodded and shook her head again. Finally she said to me, with some embarrassment, 'I am sorry, I can't do it.'

'Why not?'

'I can't see anything.'

'Why is that?'

'I don't know. Normally when I do past life readings, two patterns appear. The pattern in front represents the former life and the one at the back represents the future life. The patterns have always emerged very clearly. But, when I looked at you, there was no pattern at all. There was no previous life or future life. I don't understand this.'

'Having no former or future lives is a condition of no-birth and no-death. It is a state that has transcended birth and death. It is the Right Path.'

'What is the Right Path?' the village girl asked me.

'Realization of one's inherent nature, and the liberation from birth and death is the Right Path. In contrast, practices involving talismans and incantations, the commanding of thunder and lightning, and shifting through different realities, etc. are only magical practices. They do not constitute the Right Path. Similarly, arts of healing, astrology, and divination alone will not lead to the Right Path. Even practices of breathing and internal alchemy reliant on the intake of external supplements are practices of the phenomenal worlds and will not lead one to the Right Path.'

If all these practices do not lead to the Right Path, do they serve any purpose?

I replied, They can only be considered auxiliaries to one's cultivation to reach the Right Path. They will not liberate one from the cycle of birth and death. As a practitioner of Buddhism, one must understand the True Condition and intuit the supreme wisdom that cuts away all illusions pertaining to the phenomenal worlds. All phenomenal appearances are projections of one's mind and consciousness.

Only a practice that enables one to unite with the Divine or the Buddha, where there is no separation between body and mind and where the ultimate reality is non-duality, is an authentic Buddhist practice.

The village girl asked, `What level is the possession of divine sight and the ability to read past and future lives?

Such abilities alone will not allow one to transcend birth and death, be liberated from the seas of suffering, or escape punishment from hells

`I thought I was at a very high spiritual level!' remarked the village girl.

`Not at all. You only have your ability because you have been touched by a god`s chi.`

The village girl then spoke to me, `Since you claim you have realized the Right Path, show me something so I will believe you. If you do, I will take you as my teacher!`

`Fine,` I said. `Take another look with your divine sight!`

The village girl took a look and was greatly shocked. Immediately she knelt down and pleaded earnestly to take refuge in me. I told her that in order to be liberated from the six realms of transmigration and to attain true freedom, one must break away from all concepts of time and all concepts of selfhood.

So, what did the village girl see when she tuned into her divine sight?

She saw a blooming lotus with glistening pearl-like dew on its pistils. A true Tathagata sat above the lotus expounding words of truth that radiated forth in golden rays. Someone sat below the lotus listening to the teachings, and it was none other than Wellspring Dragon King himself.

The village girl immediately took refuge in me.

## Chapter 15: The Authentic Great Bliss

I, Living Buddha Lian-sheng Sheng-yen Lu, have studied Buddhism for many years. From my own experiences and observations, I have realized that, of the five Buddhist precepts, prohibition against sexual misconduct is the one most easily transgressed. Why is this the case? This is because human beings are born with the seeds of sexual desire and it is not easy to resist a natural human instinct. Therefore, the initial stage in the cultivation of a pure mind poses the greatest challenge!

Humans have desires and passions primarily because we have the ability to feel and perceive pleasure. Analysis of the mechanisms involved in the perception of pleasure reveals the following relationships (between the organs that perceive and the objects being perceived)

˘The eyes covet beautiful objects, the ears covet melodious sounds, the nose covets fragrant smells, the body covets touch and caress, and the mind covets sensuality.˘

There is also coveting of transient pleasure that is generated by movements of light drops discharged from the body at the height of sexual excitement.

These are the driving forces behind passion and sexual desire. These desires exist not only in young people. The middle aged and elderly are just as unsatiated in their search for passion and pleasure. Why? In my opinion, this is because sexual desire can give rise to a kind of pleasure that tops all other pleasures in life.

Sexual pleasure encompasses the senses of sight, hearing, smell, taste, touch, and consciousness. It is thus an amalgamation of the pleasures associated with the six senses and perception. Therefore, it is understandable why so many humans expend so much energy to seek out what they consider to be the greatest of all pleasures.

But, when we give the matter some thought, we realize that once the thought of sexual desire is aroused, these other thoughts follow:

- 1) Even if the conditions for the acting out of one's sexual desires are not met, one already fantasizes about the act.
- 2) In seeking to consummate the desire, one engenders numerous scheming thoughts to reach the goal.
- 3) When the object of desire is unattainable, one engenders thoughts of hatred.

- 4) When overwhelmed by passion, one engenders thoughts of possessiveness.
- 5) When the object of desire belongs to someone else, one engenders thoughts of jealousy and envy.
- 6) When one schemes to take away an object of desire from another, harmful and murderous thoughts arise.

Sexual misconduct not only leads one down the fast track to debauchery and moral corruption, but it also creates an endless chain of disasters. When transgressions of sexual misconduct are committed, one's principles are compromised, and one's dignity and honor suffer. Numerous evils will follow, and all virtues will be discarded. There is an ancient Chinese saying that declares sexual misconduct `the leader of all evils.`

`Money, sex, fame, food, and sleep` are the major temptations for human beings. In my opinion, whether one is male or female, sexual desire is the one most easily aroused. A few flirtatious looks can move the heart and send one's emotions spinning. When one succumbs to these unbridled desires, all innate virtues are disregarded.

It is extremely difficult to eradicate this affliction! Studying the Buddha dharma has led me to understand that human desire, if given free rein, will continually seek out stimulation and never be satisfied. And, once a sexual thought is stirred, all kinds of evil thoughts often follow. Once a spiritual practitioner heads down the path of debauchery, he will not cultivate noble thoughts; instead, he will find himself struggling between his baser instincts and divine aspirations.

After studying Buddhist Tantrayana, I discovered an authentic Tantric practice that eradicates sexual desires. In general, the exoteric scriptural schools resort to the following methods to suppress sexual desire:

- 1) Viewing the body as impure
- 2) Viewing the body as a skeleton
- 3) Viewing the body as emptiness

Tantrayana also advocates the practices of `chi, channels, and light drops.` In these practices, `the movement of chi opens one's channels, fire and light are engendered inside the channels, and one can attain the accomplishment of `the non-leakage of light drops`.` Throughout the process of these Energy Yoga practices, a kind of `pleasure` is engendered when chi moves through the channels, and an even greater pleasure is engendered when the light drops move through the channels. These pleasures far surpass the ordinary pleasures produced by sexual orgasms.

After experiencing the authentic greater pleasures engendered by Energy Yoga practices, the carnal pleasures engendered between man and woman pale in comparison. Therefore, the practice of Energy Yoga can be used as an antidote for the arousal of sexual desires.

I have realized that:

- 1) The circulation of chi throughout the body is associated with great bliss and pleasure.
- 2) When the channels are filled with light, one attains a supreme pure awareness.
- 3) The practice of light drops leads to a realization of the indestructible, unperturbed Buddha Nature.

I finally was able to liberate myself from the snares of human instinct, realize the true nature of Buddhahood, and attain Great Bliss, Light, and Emptiness.

I have also realized how pitiful and foolish it is for humans to remain trapped by their baser instincts. Out of sexual desire, man is born; out of sexual desire, man also perishes.

In the process of seeking an insignificant pleasure that is itself transient, numerous evils arise. The risks are not worth the trouble!

I would like to tell everyone that I have, through my practices, arrived at the above-mentioned realizations and attained the authentic Great Bliss!



