



17 • 23

SEVEN NIGHTS WAITING

Yu Hsi

The story of



a kite

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[Prologue]

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Abo's Kite—The Foundling





[Prologue]

Abo's Kite—The Foundling

A stray kite has landed on a verdant hill. Its supple bamboo body, straight as a jade whistle, is set off by delicately graceful curves. Despite being somewhat tattered, the kite's plucky and buoyant countenance continues to shine through.

Lying on the soft, fragrant grass, the kite quietly gazes upwards upon the boundless blue sky where it was freely flying about moments earlier.

As white clouds drift by, a bevy of birds noisily frolics about. Like a troop of joyous fairies, their melodious sound fills the Kite's tranquil heart with admiration.

As a light breeze wafts in from the distant forest, stirring up emerald-green waves on the grass, the Kite's diaphanous garb promptly begins to flutter, stirring up hope of returning to the bosom of the sky. Finally, however, the breeze proves to be too feeble, leaving the Kite lying dejectedly on the grass. Suddenly a gentle voice rises up next to the Kite:

Hey, Brother Wind! Is that how I should address you? By your salty smell, it seems that you have come from across the sea.

Looking around, the Kite discovers a tall blade of swaying grass excitedly calling out towards the sky.

"Such a perceptive blade of fragrant Grass! I have indeed come here by flying across the great sea," states a mild voice whirling up in the moisture-laden air.

"So then, Brother Wind, let's hear what you know about the sea!"

The Grass, Flowers, and even the Old Banyan Tree on top of the hill all chime in.

“I couldn’t be happier to do so!”

Thereupon, with a voice resonating throughout space, the Wind relates to his young friends the story of that strange, distant world replete with boats, sailors, seabirds, and fish

“Such a marvelous thousand-fold world!” exclaims the Kite, fascinated to hear the Wind tell its tale. Listening to the song of the whale, his spirit rises up to the moon and the stars

Concluding his tale with a gust of air on the grass, the dashing Wind continues his journey.

Everything returns to silence.

Reclining on the hill, the Kite discovers that even though he can’t become airborne, he’s not disappointed. For he has finally realized how comfortable it is to lie on the verdant, ebullient grass while Mother Earth continually churns out her harmonious tune.

Previously, the Kite was always dejected when it couldn’t take off. Today, however, instead of remaining fixated on the sky, he has learned how to admire the graceful charm of nature while quietly reclining on the grass. Today the Kite has begun to enjoy listening to all the sounds in the surrounding environs.

As the sun sets and the moon rises, and day and night trade places, the Kite has gradually come to understand the spontaneous vitality of the Grass and Wildflowers, as well as the gentle bearing and voice of the Old Banyan Tree. He can also recognize the sounds the various insects make at night

He has begun to live in fellowship with all the elements of the natural world.



The sea breeze blows in and blows out; the Wind blowing down from the mountain brings news of life in a deep, secluded valley. Although enjoying himself to the hilt, the little Kite can't shake off the thought of catching an updraft and soaring up into the boundless firmament.

In the undulating golden hue of dusk, the riotous laughter of several children rises up from the fields below the verdant hill. The familiar sound fills the Kite with spontaneous expectation

“Hey, look! There's a kite up there on the hill!”

Having discovered the Kite, they scramble up the slope, vying to take possession of it. After assaying its merits and a considerable amount of wrangling, the Kite goes to the youngest—a boy whose shrill cries are matched only by his intransigence.

Even before his tears have dried, the boy's face blooms with a big smile as he happily pulls and releases until the Kite finally ascends high into the sky.

“I'm flying! I'm flying! Let's go—Yeah!” rejoices the Kite as he once again soars up into the sky.

The Grass and Flowers on the hill happily exclaim:

“He's flying! He's flying.”

“Wow! From the way your sail is fluttering, I can see that you really have caught a spirited wind!”

“Bravo! Little Kite, you've finally got what you wanted!” congratulates the Old Banyan Tree, stroking his mustache and nodding smilingly.

“Indeed! How wonderful! Best of all is that you all can share in my happiness!”

The Kite flies through the sky to his heart's content.

His heart soaring ever higher along with the Kite, noticing the admiration in the eyes of his playmates, the boy smugly blurts out:

“My kite has taken off; this is my kite!”

Soaring overhead, the Kite smilingly looks down and says:

“Little Boy, it’s you who belongs to me!”

Taking interest in the Kite and the boy, a passing white cloud stops to get a better look.

Spontaneously chasing after the little boy, the others gaze up with admiration. As the Kite gradually becomes a tiny dot far off in the distance, they feel obliged to warn him:

“Careful; don’t let the kite fly off!”

“I’ll never let my kite fly off. Look how tightly I’m holding it!” replies the confident little boy.

Looking down on the children who now appear like little mushrooms on the ground, the Kite happily replies:

“Ha! I’m the one who’s holding you tight—I’m the one using this long, long string to control your every move and thought

Before the Kite can finish his sentence, a powerful wind suddenly lifts it even further up. Sensing that it’s about to be carried far, far away, the Kite hurriedly looks back towards the hill and sadly bids farewell to the Old Banyan tree, the Grass, and the Flowers:

“Goodbye, my dear friends. Brother Wind is taking me on a journey; I’ll always remember you

Rustling its ashen branches and dark green leaves, the Old Banyan Tree extends its blessings to the Kite. Gazing upwards, the Grass and Flowers vigorously wave to the Kite and bid him a pleasant voyage. Even the insects buzz out in unison to bid farewell to the Kite.

Buoyed by so many blessings, the Kite follows the wind into the twilight, as the cries of the insects, surprised shouts, and the little boy’s earth-shaking



laments grow ever fainter.

Having observed all that has transpired, the White Cloud continues on its way.

Follow the sense of the wind!

Finally free to roam at will, just like the clouds and the birds, the Kite is ecstatic!

Excitedly conversing with the White Cloud, the Kite learns all about distant mountains and seas, as the birds and geese dance and sing their songs of the earth and universe. Sailing along in the afterglow of the sun, he marvels at the ever-changing splendor of the rosy clouds. Spotting his own reflection in a deep lake, he imbibes the sound of the gurgling waters, amazed at so much beauty!

Passing over the grassy plains and mountain peaks at dawn, the Kite is deeply moved by the sight of the land imbibing the resplendent rays of the rising sun—the infinite glow of life itself wavering ever pure. Coursing above the fields, he observes the farmers and oxen contentedly walking home in the slanting rays of the setting sun after toiling in the fields all day. He is also touched by the sight of the birds assiduously feeding their young
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Riding the wind, the Kite feasts his eyes on the ever-new spectacle of the sentient natural world. Though quite pleased as he floats along, the Kite's only regret is that he can't halt as he pleases, but is bound to follow the vagaries of the Wind. At times, the Kite follows the White Cloud through the forested mountains on its way to some lofty peak to visit his old friends the Pine and the Cyprus. Yet the Kite is continually carried far off by the wind, missing the chance to join in the spirited conversation. At other times, the birds invite the Kite to come and see their chicks learning to fly, yet the wind

gives him no respite.

Indeed, the Kite is beholden to the wind.

One time, the Kite pursued the sun rising in the east, another time he rose up in the night sky, keen on observing the mysteries of the moon and stars. Nonetheless, the Kite can but follow the capricious Wind. Flying on and on over innumerable mountains, forests, fields, and towns; having passed through countless morning fogs and night dews; not sure how long ago he left the boy's hand; the Kite is now tattered and tired.

As the rosy pink clouds of dusk again fill the sky, the Kite accompanies a flock of wild pigeons passing over a dark peak on their way to a broad field. Full of tender green rice seedlings, the fields surround a great city; beyond the fields are multiple ranges of lush mountains. Emerging from the mountains to the east, a limpid river full of sauntering fish meanders through the tranquil countryside. Where it emerges from the mountains, the river is bounded by forests full of wild peach, apricot, and plum trees. In the early spring the tender leaves join the multitudes of vibrant flowers in reflecting the rosy glow of the resplendent evening sun. Upon reaching the broad fields, the river feeds numerous irrigation canals lined with drooping willow trees which gracefully sway in the afternoon breeze.

At dusk, glowing clouds fill the sky, as the tranquil mountains and fields are dyed in rosy pink and fragrant smoke gracefully spirals up from the city's chimneys.

"Such a lovely place!" spontaneously praises the Kite while circling above the picture-perfect scene.

"That it is! Please come and visit our fair home!" call out the Pigeons as they happily continue towards the city.



Following the flock of Pigeons into the city, the Kite looks down upon an orderly layout of streets filled with people and vehicles moving to and fro.

“What a flourishing city!” silently observes the Kite.

Beyond the tall buildings, in the eastern suburbs skirting the mountains there is a bamboo forest of deep green, a peaceful and alluring spot adorning the city. As the Pigeons fly into the bamboo forest in single file, they call out to the captivated Kite:

“We live on Abo’s Green Bamboo Cliff.”

As though enchanted with this auspicious Arcadian place, the Wind gradually loses its force, allowing the Kite to gently alight into the deep green bamboo forest.

Early each morning, Abo walks out to the Green Bamboo Cliff to visit his friends the wild pigeons. After calling together the pigeons with several shrill whistles, Abo discovers the tattered Kite hanging on a bamboo branch. Taking it down and returning home, Abo replaces the Kite’s paper and names it “the Foundling.”



17 23

The Seventeenth—Rice Shoots

Just before the harvest, the plump golden ears of rice droop down on their stalks. Stirred by a gentle wind, the stalks of ripening paddy emit their innumerable beautiful voices





The Aspiration of the Rice Shoots

Early in the morning, when the wind blows gently and the entire city is asleep, the otherwise bustling streets become silent and empty. As the birds welcome the sun by gracefully fluttering and chirping under the eaves, with the Foundling in hand, Abo briskly strides out towards the open country outside the city.

After retrieving the Foundling from the bamboo forest, Abo carefully polished its frame and skillfully fitted it with gorgeous new paper. Now the Foundling gracefully and steadily ascends, and sometimes even turns somersaults in midair! Pleased to be clothed with this tough yet ethereal garb, the Foundling can fly even higher and further than before!

After spending a good deal of time with Abo, the Foundling has come to regard him as a wise old man.

Although 80 years is old for most people, Abo is still spry and nimble. Quick-eared and sharp-eyed, Abo is also highly sensitive and astute; for the Foundling, this is Abo's most endearing quality. With a childlike glimmer in his eyes, Abo now takes the Foundling with him wherever he goes. From the main thoroughfares to the tiny alleyways, young and old alike recognize him and smilingly call out, "Abo! Abo!" The Foundling also calls him Abo.

Early each morning, just as the sky is beginning to brighten, Abo takes up the Foundling, makes his way through the city streets and out into the open country to be baptized by the first rays of the sun; this daily rite brings the Foundling unsurpassable joy. Roaming freely in the brisk morning air, at times the Foundling listens to the birds happily chirping and receives the tidings coming in on the mild wind and white clouds; at times he flies low

along the riverbank listening to an ensemble consisting of drooping willows, peach and plum blossoms, and the gurgling current For the Foundling, this is a lovely and pure gift of nature. Day to day, moment to moment, this magnificent melody delights the ears of all who listen.

Listening attentively to the multifarious sounds of nature, the Foundling enters into a conversation with his early morning friends of soaring countenance.

The Foundling still remembers the first time Abo brought him out into the fields, some days after bringing him home from the bamboo forest. Due to the continuous spring rains, at first Abo kept the Foundling inside for quite some time. When the weather finally cleared and he once again soared up into the blue sky, the Foundling was extremely pleased to meet up again and chat, sing, and laugh with his old friends—the Wind, the Clouds, and the Birds. It was at this time that something rather amazing occurred—

Surprised to hear the Foundling singing with the Birds and chatting with the Wind and the Clouds, Abo entered into conversation with the Foundling. The Foundling shared with Abo all that he had seen and heard in nature, and Abo told the Foundling some interesting stories about the human world

On crisp and blustery autumn mornings, the rolling waves of golden rice grains laden with dew brilliantly reflect the first rays of the rising sun. Stirred by a gentle wind, the plump and drooping tassels emit a sonorous sound of innumerable voices, adorning the expanse of heaven and earth with its dignified grace.

As usual, just as the first golden rays of the sun are bursting forth on the peaks, Abo and the Foundling have already reached the fields filled with golden grains.



“The awesome power of nature is indescribably beautiful,” sighs Abo, stooping down to inspect an ear of fragrant rice laden with morning dew, his ears filled with the subtle sound of the undulating tassels.

Floating in the sky and gazing down on the broad and beautiful fields, upon hearing Abo’s words of praise, the Foundling spontaneously says to a Cloud:

“The sight of the ripe paddy has a way of moving men’s hearts! Just listen to that magnificent sound given off by the golden rice tassels blowing in the mild wind!”

Although high up in the sky, the Foundling can clearly make out the tassels of mature grain dancing in the wind and singing out in unison. Observing the bend of the golden tassels with their slender green shafts, the Foundling recognizes the subtle movement of the seasons, and recalls a past meeting with the young rice seedlings.

On that bright and beautiful spring morning, the wind was reviving the vitality of the great earth. In the fields covered with a shallow layer of water, the farmers were industriously transplanting tender green rice seedlings into the broad paddy fields crisscrossed by pathways and water channels, and displaying a picturesque reflection of the sky and mountains.

On that fine morning Abo was carrying the Foundling and walking along the embankments dividing the paddy fields while carefully inspecting the seedlings. Noticing that Abo was flashing a subtle smile now and then, the Foundling curiously asked:

“Abo, what’s so interesting that you’re smiling like that?”

“Ha, ha! Oh, really?” asked Abo with an infectious smile.

“Just what is it that’s making you smile?” persisted the Foundling.

“I noticed how well the rice seedlings are growing, and then —”

“Rice seedling? What’s that?” blurted out the Foundling like a curious child.

“Look! These tender green shoots here in the field are rice seedlings! They are grains of rice which have sprouted and begun to grow tall. In the spring, the farmers transplant them into the fields and wait for them to mature into tall stalks topped with tassels of golden rice. This is the staple food of everyone in our city!”

“I see. But why are all the blades of grass planted in orderly rows? They seem to be no ordinary grass!”

“Oh! Ha, ha, ha!” Abo heartily laughed.

His interest piqued, the Foundling began to inspect what seemed to him to be just another type of grass, until he finally realized that he was looking at rice plants. Thereupon he heard two voices in conversation:

“Wow! The morning dew is so sweet and refreshing!”

“That it is! And so is the spring breeze!”

“Wow! Actually, this world is incredibly beautiful. Just look at the sky reflected in the water, the green hills and crystal-clear water, the white clouds floating along in the blue sky—a veritable riot of beauty!”

“You’ve got that right! And thanks to the bright and brilliant sun and the fragrant and fertile soil, we are so very strong and healthy!”

Finally realizing that the voices belonged to two seedlings happily chatting near Abo, the Foundling continued to curiously listen to their conversation.

“How did you come up with this brilliant idea of manifesting as two rice seedlings in the thousand-fold world?”

“Hey! I’ll tell you a secret—a grain of rice germinates in the ground for 15 days before sprouting, and then it takes another 15 days to grow into a seedling. And then what? Think about it. What will it be like when we



finally grow tassels and are blown by a light breeze?”

“Ah! So wonderful! So profound!”

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“Hi, Seedlings! I’m Abo’s kite, the Foundling,” called out the Foundling, unable to contain his curiosity.

The Foundling’s earnest and sincere greeting attracted the attention of not only the seedlings, but also Abo.

Looking up, the Seedlings were pleased by the sight of the Foundling dexterously coursing through the blue sky, but surprised that he could hear them talking.

“A talking kite!” marveled the Seedling on the left, waving its little green arms, then smilingly returning the greeting, “Hi! So nice to meet you. Let’s be friends! For all creatures under the sun are one big family!”

“That’s right! The wind, the clouds, the birds, the worms, the trees, the grass, the flowers—they’re all our good friends. We enjoy frequently getting together with them to enjoy a good chat!” exclaimed the Rice Seedling on the right, gently swaying in the wind.

“Foundling! Foundling! Who are you talking to?” called out Abo.

Abo, I’m talking with my new friends, two rice seedlings here in the paddy field,” explained the Foundling.

“Two rice seedlings in the paddy field?”

“That’s right! They’re standing right next to your heels!”

Thereupon Abo, squatting down to take a closer look at the chatty rice shoots, thought:

“Is it these two? All these little fellows look the same to me, all so robust and dark green!”

Thinking thus, Abo spontaneously smiled at the seedlings swaying in the

morning wind. Sensing that the seedlings were actually returning the smile, Abo couldn't help but think:

“Right from sowing these rice seeds in the Birth of Spring and then transplanting them into the paddy fields, these seedlings have been growing extremely well. This year's harvest is sure to be a good one!”

Carefully thinking it over, Abo spontaneously said to the seedlings:

“Little Rice Seedlings! How is it you are so happy and healthy?”

Then the Seedlings slowly swayed in the refreshing breeze, as if singing a reply.

“Abo, Abo, the Seedlings are talking to you!” urgently called out the Foundling.

“Really? What are they saying?” asked Abo while looking over the rice seedlings like so many green needles drawing up the water. Then the Foundling related the seedlings' conversation to Abo—

“Ever since we became rice seedlings we have been growing so very happily, for our common aspiration is to live well.”

“Especially when we see the farmers smiling faces after toiling in the fields all day, we are even more pleased with the idea of bringing sustenance to the people.”

“This is our primary reason for manifesting in this world, and we are fully determined to carry it to completion!”

“So, we have to live well, with sincerity, gusto, and freedom of spirit!”

Listening to the Foundling's words while peering towards the distant embankment dividing the deep green paddy fields, Abo was deeply touched by their sincere aspiration.

Unwittingly, Abo became especially solicitous of the rice seedlings. From that day onwards, as he made his daily round through the paddy fields, Abo



has paid special attention to how the seedlings were growing, noticing that they were growing taller and greener. Abo also gradually discovered that those two Seedlings had a tremendous zeal for life, such that they were full of praise for even a drop of dew and ever magnanimous whenever things went contrary to their expectations.

One time, a powerful typhoon ravaged the entire area for two days in a row, leaving the young seedlings prostrate and waterlogged. Only with the concerted efforts of a great many farmers did the seedlings get back on their feet again to smilingly face the wind. Having recovered, the Seedlings joyfully proclaimed:

“The power of nature is truly inconceivable! Formidable indeed are the wind and the rain!”

“How interesting! Sometimes the rain is as gentle as a little girl, and sometimes as fierce as a protector deity. This world truly is a kaleidoscope of change!”

“The most important thing is that we passed the test,” added Abo in praise of the fortitude and resilience of the plucky rice seedlings.

The Foundling also recalls how one time a certain farmer had fallen ill and couldn’t work in the fields for several days in row. During that time the paddy fields were overrun by weeds—some appearing just like rice seedlings—which blocked the sun and gobbled up the nutriments in the soil. Yet the seedlings silently took it all in stride, resisted the temptation to complain about the encroaching weeds, and instead made an even greater effort to stretch out towards the sun and imbibe nourishment from the soil.

Happily growing upwards, the seedlings continued to sing in the breeze, and the Foundling never heard a single word of resentment from them. As soon as he had recovered, the farmer went out to the fields, removed the weeds,

and added a generous layer of fertilizer.

“That’s how to turn misfortune into good fortune! Now we are more robust than ever and up for any challenge which may come our way. So let the eight winds blow as they please!”

“That’s right! Those weeds actually made us stronger.”

Hearing the Foundling recount how the seedlings’ emerged victorious in their battle with the weeds, Abo is filled with joy.

In this way, from spring right through fall, Abo and the Foundling admire the irrepressible spirit of the seedlings steadfastly growing in the paddy fields

Gently blowing in the cool breeze, the golden-tasseled rice stalks sway in unison and emit their endlessly delightful fragrance.

“It’s said that our ancestors came from a single seed.”

Flying low, the Foundling listens in on the conversation of the Seedlings—now mature rice plants.

“That’s right. What’s more, when this world was first taking shape, this hearty seed was deeply ensconced inside a block of perennial ice.”

Informed by the Foundling of the Seedlings’ fascinating dialogue, Abo exclaims, “This seed was invested with a sacred mission!”

“A sacred mission?” wonder all the rice plants, filled with curiosity.

“That’s right! A sacred mission like none other. We are the descendants of that very seed, and our purpose is to serve as the staple food of the human race!”

“So then—our purpose is to benefit others by growing and ripening!”

“Think about it. Throughout our entire growth process—sprouting, forming tender shoots, earing—we continually depend on the support provided by



our friends the sun, the soil, the wind, and the water. By filling the paddy fields with these glistening yellow tassels, we are making our contribution!”

News of the conversation between the two Seedlings rapidly spreads throughout the vast paddy fields, causing all the rice plants to ask in unison:

“Really? Is it really almost time to make our contribution? If so, just how are we to bring our sacred mission to completion?”

As the morning breeze carries the fragrance of the gracefully undulating tassels of rice far and wide, the Foundling perceives a sense of jubilation throughout the paddy fields. Captivated by the conversation, the empathetic Abo partakes in the rice plants’ joy.

“When we are fully ripe, one part of the unhusked rice will be processed into white rice for human consumption, and the other part will be placed in the soil to form seedlings for future sowing.”

“This is how, unbeknownst to most humans, since time immemorial, our ancient lineage has been transmitting the inexhaustible bounty of nature!”

“So it’s only by making a selfless contribution that the journey of life comes to completion and fully participates in the inconceivable transformations of nature!”

“Contribution is the key!” whisper the paddy fields.

Deeply moved by the altruistic aspiration of the Seedlings, Abo contemplates:

“These little Seedlings are marvelous indeed! Their growth and maturity is an expression of wisdom and selflessly contributing to others in recognition of the bounty bestowed on them by nature! We humans are also blessed by the bounty of nature, but how do we reciprocate?”

Leisurely traversing the narrow footpaths bounded by rice tassels, Abo

considers the words of the Foundling and empathically enters into the inner world of the Seedlings.

“Over their entire course of growth, the paddy fields continually exhibit such a charming appearance!” smilingly praises Abo while gazing out upon the paddy fields bordered by water channels. “As young seedlings they happily stand up to the wind and grow tall. Looking over this vast sea of golden tassels, I see the beauty of gratitude. Tassels bending with the compassion of a bodhisattva, they manifest in the world, ever displaying their boundlessly graceful bearing!”

“I know what you mean!” chimes in the Foundling. “Looking down on the rice seedlings gives me a sense of ease and contentment, as does the wonderful fragrance of the golden rice tassels!”

Two sparrows deftly alight in the paddy fields, take up some rice grains in their beaks, and noisily fly off towards the city. The Foundling recognizes them as the sparrows who nest in the eaves of the blacksmith’s shop on the western side of the city and who are busy raising their three baby sparrows. Rhythmically waving in the wind, the rice tassels continue singing out their verses of praise.

“Such gratefulness! Receiving just a few grains of rice, the sparrows fly off elated! And, as the Seedlings point out, the birds who eat the paddy are the same birds who daily embellish Mother Earth with their euphonious songs,” observes the Foundling, fluttering in the wind, seemingly echoing the rice plants joy.

“Hey, Abo! Top of the morning!” heartily call out several early-rising farmers.

“Morning, everyone! After a few more days, these fields will be ready for reaping; looks like this year’s harvest is going to be a good one!” reports



Abo, while reflecting on how hard they've had to toil to bring a single rice crop to maturity.

"That's right! That's right! We've had good weather, enough rain, and heaven's blessings; now we're looking to have a bumper crop!" exult the swarthy-faced farmers. "To give thanks to heaven, we've invited the famous White Lotus Theatrical Troop to the city, and they've agreed to put on a performance for seven nights in a row. Tonight is the opening performance, and everyone's welcome to attend!"

Delighted by the news, Abo fondly thinks of the two admirable and adorable Rice Seedlings:

"There's a big smile on the farmers' faces and the entire city is celebrating the bumper crop. Seedlings, oh Seedlings! Your maturity gives the people joy and hope!"

"And not just humans, but so many other beings as well," reflects Abo, remembering the birds which frequent the paths running through the paddy fields.

Carrying the Foundling, Abo leisurely strolls back to the city, his heart filled with joy as he recalls the indescribably euphonious song of the paddy fields.

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The night everyone has been waiting for has finally arrived.

Young and old alike have assembled in the square used for drying rice, tonight illuminated with brightly burning lamps. The Foundling in hand, having arrived well in advance, Abo is welcomed with a round of cordial greetings and respectfully ushered to a seat in the front row.

"A year of plenty!" is heard on everyone's smiling lips as they excitedly

discuss the main attraction—the White Lotus Theatrical Troop.

Three sonorous notes from a large gong on the stage reverberate through the boisterous crowd.

Just then, a figure topped with curly locks and draped in a light-yellow gown leisurely approaches the center of the stage. Captivating the audience with a flash of his perspicacious eyes, he announces in a natural and powerful voice:

“Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. I’m Fuhua, the director of the White Lotus Theatrical Troop. We’re very pleased to have this opportunity to perform one of our favorite full-scale dramas—Seven Nights Waiting. People often ask me if this is a true story.”

After a moment of silence, Fuhua flashes an affectionate smile and continues:

“In this thousand-fold world there is a profound secret, the key to which is ensconced in an august and eternal numerical expression.”

Having attracted everyone’s attention with his mysterious charm, his harmonious voice instantly pacifies their minds and puts them into a receptive mood—

“The plays performed by White Lotus are not merely a form of entertainment, but depict the search for the profound meaning of life. If you follow the story with your heart, it will lift you up and carry you over the majestic peaks of the spirit!

“Passing beyond the clear blue firmament, on the lovely arc danced out by the sun, moon, and stars, you can hear the rhythm of the universe—17-23—meandering through space.

“Following the low-flying heavenly twilight, you can make out a boat made



of magnolia wood riding the glistening waves of light, coursing through the channel of the spirit with the coordinates 17-23. Then go upstream on the river of clouds formed of seven days and seven nights.

“This is where you can find the enigma of life revealed in between the 17th and 23rd days of the lunar calendar.

“Now that the sun has set and the bright moon is on the rise, it’s time for Seven Nights Waiting to transport us through time and space, opening up the deepest mysteries of life, revealing the inherent wisdom of the mind—17-23, a story about both you and I.”

The lamps dim and the curtain slowly opens

The First Night

—The Burning House and the Three Vehicles

What is the source of life? What is its purpose?

Several thousand years ago, in an ancient mystical kingdom, a beautiful story unfolded—

A group of people went in search of a legendary treasure trove. Over the course of countless years, they traveled far and wide, leaving behind the din, explorers striding into the unknowable future

Act one

△ Arcadia

(The stage lights gradually dim to the accompaniment of a lilting melody. Three celestial beings saunter about in a mist-filled region of Arcadia)

Celestial Being A: (singing)

Heaven and earth boundless and vast,

A dream of day turning into night also boundless and vast,

Innumerable sentient beings a universe outside the universe.

Celestial Being B: (speaking)

There

Falling flowers make the sound of the qin;

Bright moon born of coral branches,

At ease, tranquil self-produced misty clouds.



Celestial Being C: (speaking)

Ah what a lovely and august world,

Everyone has all they require nothing more, nothing less.

(After singing about the homeland of the spirit, the celestial beings leisurely leave the stage and the lights slowly dim.)

△ The shed in the garden

(A lone moonbeam illuminates a shed inside a garden filled with fragrant medicinal plants. Inside the shed is an amazing array of medicinal herbs, bottles, cabinets, and related equipment. A group of boisterous children burst into the cottage)

Little Brother: (purposefully)

Let's see who can find it first!

I'm going to look in some secret place!

(They excitedly rummage about for some time, but don't find any special medicine or books on medicine. Then the elder brother, regarded as the brightest amongst them, speaks —)

Elder Brother: Father's wisdom is incomparable. He has the original version of Hiding the World in the World. We have to keep looking until we find it. (The children spread out and continue looking.)

Little Brother: I've found it! (The others gather around the wide-eyed Little Brother.)

I found this dusty glass calabash. After brushing it off with my sleeve I carefully opened it just a tiny bit. When I took a short whiff I felt totally dizzy, as if I were about to fly up into the sky; then a bunch of celestial maidens appeared right before my eyes

(The others crowd around and look at Little Brother holding up an empty glass calabash.)

Brothers: (in a ruckus) Let me see it! Let me see it!

Elder Brother: Everybody calm down! This could be dangerous

(Before he can finish his sentence, in the melee the lid pops completely off. A fine smoke floats up from behind the curtain, instantly affecting all of the children: some roll on the floor, some blabber incoherently, some look dazed and confused, others stare blankly. Then they all faint and the stage gradually goes dark. Several shooting stars cross the sky.)

Act two

△ Jewel Tree Village

(The history of Jewel Tree Village stretches back thousands of years. On an extremely windy morning, Sarvajna brings Candrababha and the Treasure Seekers to this nearly deserted village. They look around in amazement.)

Disciple A: (stepping back) Watch out! There's a scorpion next to your foot!

Disciple B: (frightened) Ah! I've walked into a spider web!



Disciple C: Wow! This courtyard is engulfed by weeds.

Candraprabha: What is this place? It seems that it was once so beautiful.

Sarvajna: This is Jewel Tree Village. The village chief is a wise old man; he's an old friend of mine. Indeed, it was once a lovely and prosperous village (looking around) But now? Now it's gone to pot Alas, not even such a flourishing village as this can escape the heartless web of time!

(A tall and august-looking old man approaches from the distance, and is pleasantly surprised to see Sarvajna.)

Chief of Jewel Tree Village: What! Is it you? (Chief and Sarvajna embrace) Are you leading a group of disciples on a journey in search of the truth of life and the legendary treasure trove?

Sarvajna: (jubilantly) That's right! We were passing nearby, so I decided to bring them to see your village. (sound of children laughing repeatedly emerges from inside a house) But what has become of this place?

Chief: (sighing heavily) Ah! These ignorant children are addicted to play, and there's nobody to keep things up and maintain the fields. Now this once-beautiful village is slowly going to ruin before my eyes. It's all so very sad Sit down for a while and I'll tell you all about it.

(They all follow the Village Chief. As a dilapidated building rattles in the increasingly strong wind, three children come running out.)

Child A: (high singing voice) Hey!

I love to play, for time is rushing by;

Better play today, for who knows what tomorrow may hold.

Child B: Only play matters,
For it brings boundless merriment.

Child C: Let's play a game!

Three Children: (waving towards the curtain) Hey!

(More children appear and sing the same lines. After the final "Hey!" they run off to the eastern courtyard and continue playing. The silhouette of a multistory building appears on the backdrop. As the Village Chief leads the others, there is a loud noise; blazing flames and human silhouettes are seen running about.)

Servants: (in a flurry) Fire!
Help put out the fire!
Hurry up and put out the fire!

(Human silhouettes flash across the backdrop as the hurried footsteps get louder. An old butler rushes forth.)

Butler: Bad news, Chief. There's a fire! It's spreading in all directions!
You'd better come quick!

Chief: (voice like a huge bell) Tell everyone to help put out the fire!

Butler: Chief, there are already lots of people fighting the fire! But the wind is so strong and this house is so dilapidated that it may not be possible to put out the fire

Chief: (firmly) We must make an all-out effort!

Sarvajna: (towards the Treasure Seekers) We must help fight the fire!



△ The blazing fire

(Amidst the sound of crackling flames, the tall building begins to collapse. In the eastern courtyard the children are still lost in play. Candrababha and several servants rush about.)

Servant A: Chief, the Moon Pavilion has collapsed. The fire has already reached the west wing, and is spreading this way

Candrababha: (nervously) Sarvajna, the fire is too fierce; we can't extinguish it!

Servant B: Chief, we'd better get out of here! The only way out is about to be engulfed by the flames!

Chief: (looking around) My children! Where are my children? (anxiously) Everybody! Come help me save my children!

(Thick smoke whirls around, as the sound of the wind becomes louder. People cough and run about in confusion, looking for the exit. Seeing that the situation is critical, several faithful servants, seeing no hope of saving their master's play-addicted children, hastily huddle the Chief and the rest of his family towards the exit. Just then, the children's laughter rises up. Candrababha suddenly stops. Looking towards the source of the laughter, he discovers that the children are still happily playing in the east wing of the burning building.)

Chief: (urgently) Children! The building is on fire! Stop playing and quickly run out!

(Candraprabha rushes back towards the inferno and calls out through the smoke and flames. The children, however, pay no heed.)

Candraprabha: (terror stricken) Chief! These children are so fond of play that they can't hear you calling out to them!

(Whipped up by the wind, the flames climb ever higher, as pillars and beams topple all about accompanied by the terrifying sound of the crackling fire. Though nervous, the Chief retains his wits.)

Chief: (patiently) Children, the building is about to collapse with you in it! You'll be suffocated and consumed by the fire!

Quickly come out! All your uncles are anxiously waiting for you outside!

(The two youngest children run out to the balcony.)

Child A: Father! (in the tone of a spoiled child) Can you wait a moment? I want to play a little longer.

Child B: Right! (excitedly pointing towards the fire) Just look at those red flames devouring everything; what fun!

(Hearing the shouts of glee of their siblings still inside, the two children rush back inside to continue playing.)

Candraprabha: They simply have no fear of the danger, but the house is already engulfed in flames and it's almost too late! Let's run inside and carry them out in our arms.



Chief: (shaking his head) No good; it's too dangerous. We might be able to wrap them up in our cloaks and bundle them out, but these children are foolish and addicted to play. If they manage to break free and scurry about, then we'll lose our chance to save them!

Candrababha: So what can we do? These foolish children pay no attention to our warnings, but how can we just stand by and watch them perish in this conflagration?

(The Chief and Candrababha continue to call out to the children, but they pay no heed. Instead, fascinated by the raging fire, they run about ogling at the spectacle, throwing various objects into the fire and marveling as they are swallowed up by the flames.)

Chief: (resignedly) Alas! These foolish children are just too stubborn and unruly. Because they don't understand the perilous situation they are in, they simply ignore our kindly appeals

(Seeing that his children are too lost in play to notice the danger raging all about, the Chief suddenly has an idea—)

Chief: (shouting) Children—come out! Come out and play with these wonderful toys I have prepared for you!

(As soon as they hear about the wonderful toys waiting for them outside, the children all stop playing, come out to the balcony, and attentively listen to what their father is saying. Candrababha is amazed.)

Chief: Outside the courtyard gate there are a good many goat-carts, deer-carts, and ox-carts, all brightly painted and decorated with jewels. Take whichever one you like. (pointing towards the gate)

Whatever kind of cart you want, there it is!

Go wherever you want in it! Wherever you want to go, it will take you there!

Play with it to your heart's content

Hurry up! Otherwise you'll be sorry!

(As soon as they hear that so many wonderful carts are waiting for them outside, they shout with glee and scramble out of the burning house. Amazed, Candrababha looks at the Chief.)

Chief: (smiling) My children have all come out! Let's get out of here!

(Candrababha and the Chief run out of the courtyard; the stage goes dark.)

△ Pastures, streams, flowers

(Cheerful music ushers in a bright and majestic scene of limpid streams flowing through a vast meadow full of blooming flowers and embellished by the melody of the kalavinka bird. The faint glow of fire can be seen off in the distance, as the elated children scamper about and tug on the Chief's clothes.)

Children: (in a hubbub) Dear Father! Where is the jeweled goat-cart?

I want a deer-cart.

I want an ox-cart.



I also want an ox-cart

Sarvajna: (singing)

Mentally observing the jeweled-lotus dais,

The tenfold wisdom nurturing the womb of the sacred;

Freely penetrating reality,

Fully realizing the Tathagata in a single leaf.

Chief: (tenderly) My wealth is unlimited; it's like a national treasury. Even if I gave a generous portion to everybody in this kingdom, there would still be much left over. These children of mine are very dear to me. I ought to treat them equally by giving each one of them what is best—the cart yoked with a white ox.

(towards servant) Open the stables. I want to give each of my children an exquisitely wrought cart yoked with a big white ox! Children, quickly come and take an ox-cart! Possessing it, you will know what it means to be happy and carefree.

(The children jubilantly follow the servant, as the glow of the distant flames gradually fades

As Candraprabha looks on in amazement at everything that has transpired, the sound of Sarvajna's hearty laughter suddenly rises up.)

Sarvajna: Candraprabha, the Chief of Jewel Tree Village is a wise man. He knows that every person lives in a house engulfed in the boundless flames of greed, hatred, and delusion.

The Chief uses his great wisdom to awaken people's minds, such that in an instant the body as the basis of the defilements transforms into the body of golden light.

Although the Chief is endowed with much strength and courage, he didn't use it to rescue his foolish children from the burning house. Instead, he employed an ingenious skillful means to lure them out so that they might discover their pure and radiant original nature.

Candraprabha: (exultantly) Look! The flames are subsiding and the black clouds in the sky are dispersing.

You lucky children. Now that you all have a lofty ox-cart, spacious and hung with strings of jewels, drive them about in the meadow to your heart's content.

These children are all so delighted and full of glee

You know, Chief, you really are a wise man!

Chief: Everyone has the capacity to obtain a brilliant, golden, dharma-body like mine; all you have to do is vow to leave the burning house of the defilements!

Sarvajna: (singing)

See him busily working at home depending on whose effort?

Observing the dust what is the white lotus?

Storing up footprints covered in mud.

The house bursts into flames,

Yet the children are still inside,

Playing, oblivious to the danger;

The Chief devises a skillful means.

The Treasure Seekers: (chorus)

Mind as bright as the moon,

Appears in the gate of wisdom;



A cart pulled by a great white ox,
Capable of holding all humanity;
The bodhi seed,
Unstained by the fine dust;
A spacious jeweled ox-cart,
Wheels of boundless treasure.
Mentally observing the jeweled lotus dais,
The tenfold wisdom nurturing the womb of the sacred;
Freely penetrating reality,
Fully realizing the Tathagata in a single leaf.

— Curtain closes —



17 23

The Eighteenth—Flower Stamens

It's said that in the vast arc of the Milky Way, our planet is like a particle of pollen

This world of ours came into being on a radiant golden stamen. Originally, all the beings of this world were radiant and pure. But because they indulged their curiosity, in time their radiance faded and the golden sand turned into mud.





The Secret of the Stamen

The sky clears and a refreshing south wind blows. As the fragrance of the flowers steals through the louvered shutters, Abo quickly turns over and sits up. Then, with childlike excitement, he parts the blinds and opens the windows, ushering in the fresh air and the undulating symphony of birdsong.

After a quick washing up, the Foundling in hand, Abo briskly sets off into the cool morning breeze. Having been fully recharged overnight, the morning sun sends off innumerable golden rays, seemingly issuing forth from the gray clouds filling the sky, framed with orange and violet.

“Wow! We’ve risen earlier than the sun!” calls out the Foundling as he robustly waves to his many friends—the natural elements—while fluttering about in the wind. As usual, the Foundling leisurely flies about while admiring the ever-diverse scenery. Yet today something seems different.

On most mornings, Abo picks up the Foundling and leisurely strolls through the streets and out into the fields, casually looking about and visiting whichever element of nature catches his interest. Today, however, he quickly strides out of the city and heads directly towards the range of mountains in the south.

Before long, they reach the edge of the paddy fields, whereupon Abo adroitly reels in the Foundling and enters the lush green forest. Thereupon the Foundling spontaneously asks:

“Abo, where are we going? Today you seem a bit different; rather mysterious and excited!”

“That’s right! Today is rather different,” replies Abo as he adroitly ascends

the familiar damp path leading into the mountains.

“Huh?” the Foundling wonders out loud. While continuing to calmly observe the captivating tiny flowers clinging to the trees and crevices in the rocks, the Foundling curiously asks, “What’s different?”

“You didn’t notice that amazing fragrant wind blowing in from the south this morning?”

Reaching the top of a steep escarpment, Abo stops and takes a few deep breaths. Having already dispersed several layers of clouds, the brilliant sunlight pierces through the forest canopy, paving the pathway with a jade-like image of shadow and light. As the beads of sweat on his head glisten in the sunlight, Abo’s childlike zeal is picked up by the Foundling.

A gust of mountain wind whisks through the forest.

“Foundling, can you smell it? That’s the scent of the wind!” says Abo, taking in a deep breath of air before delightedly striding on.

Hearing Abo’s words, the Foundling spontaneously focuses his attention on the mountain wind caressing his entire sail. Carried on the wind are countless fine particles so minute as to be almost imperceptible, yet bringing a most refreshing tactile sensation

“Oh! These are minute pollen granules, making the air so delightful. No wonder Abo is in such high spirits!”

“Ah! We’re there!”

As the Foundling enjoys the scent of the crisp mountain air, Abo crosses over the pass.

There is no lush forest on this side of the mountain; only vast grassy slopes teeming with bright and brilliant flowers of all description scattered about under the azure blue sky. It’s as if they have arrived in a strange, new world,



“Wow! Have we arrived at some kind of celestial garden?” spontaneously asks the awe-struck Foundling.

Surveying the scene, as if spellbound, Abo says:

“Lately the weather has been highly unpredictable. It’s as if one moment it’s spring, and the next moment its fall. Even the royal poinciana trees in the city are three months late in blossoming. Yet up here, the flowers are all in bloom, as though nature were playing some kind of trick on us!

“Oh? Right! It’s not spring, so why are all the flowers blooming?” asks the surprised Foundling.

After launching the Foundling and gradually raising him high into the sky, Abo finds a large flat rock, sits down, and quietly observes the sky, listens to the wind, and smells the scent of the flowers

Under the clear and bright sky of sapphire blue, these grassy slopes bathed in the brilliant rays of the sun see so very few human visitors that it would seem that its innumerable flowers bloom forth entirely for the sake of delighting the wind, clouds, birds, bees, and butterflies.

“Abo, do you smell the lilies, rhododendrons, hyacinths, and orchids?” asks the Foundling after silently surveying the environs.

Still seated on the rock and deep in thought, Abo leisurely smiles and says:

“Following the Waking of Insects, this place is always full of flowers, seemingly vying with one another for pride of place, but actually existing in harmony. It seems to me that only Mother Nature is capable of creating such a lovely scene. When I accidentally discovered this place, I thought that I must have stumbled upon some kind of celestial garden! Ha, ha, ha!”

Thinking back as he speaks, Abo’s burst of childlike laughter reverberates in the wind. To the Foundling, now soaring on high and looking down upon the sea of flowers, Abo’s smiling face appears just like one of the splendid

blossoms.

“For many years now, every time this sweet scent comes blowing in on the wind, I am irresistibly drawn to this place. Year after year this place dons a different costume. As soon as the south wind blows, the flowers bloom forth in riotous profusion, as if attending some prearranged sumptuous banquet. This spring I came here once or twice full of hope and expectation, but I only found pale green weeds and grayish brown rocks, making me wonder why the flowers had not appeared. Little did I know that this year they would be late to bloom!”

Quietly listening to Abo’s soft-spoken words carried aloft by the wind, the Foundling spontaneously swoops low to get a closer look at this wondrous palace of innumerable flowers

“Just what was it the flowers were waiting for?” wonders the Foundling, baffled as he looks about.

At first glance, something dancing in the glistening rays of sunlight to the rhythm of the wind amidst the violet-red flowers appears to be a troop of mischievous pixies. Overcome with curiosity, the Foundling draws near for a closer look, whereupon he discovers that it’s the fine golden stamens protruding from the flowers. Then he suddenly hears something that sounds like sonorous chanting reverberating throughout the flowery slopes.

Captivated by the sound, the Foundling can’t help but seek out its source.

“Ah! It’s the sound of the wind blowing through the lilies!

The Foundling gazes upon the slopes covered with slender lilies elegant as jade, gracefully swaying while casting the fragrance of their new buds into the wind.

The delicate and mellow sound wafts through space, accompanied by the sounds of the south wind, birds, and insects, both near and far. As the



entire meadow is permeated with the gently flowing song, the Foundling spontaneously sings along.

Listening closely to the Foundling sing, Abo finds the melody to be quite remarkable! Intoxicated by the sound, Abo feels as though he has entered into the meadow, as if he has become the flowers, the grass, and the insects, all happily thriving on this remarkable meadow.

“Wow! What a fresh and splendid sound!”

“Sister Lily, your song is simply fantastic!”

“It sure is! What an intoxicating sound!”

Soon after the choral singing concludes and the distant echoes fade away, enthusiastic words of praise unexpectedly burst forth from the various flowers and grasses covering the meadow.

“What a splendid song! Where did you learn it, Sister Lily? Who taught you this song?” the Foundling spontaneously asks.

“The spring wind! While I was huddled up sleeping inside a bulbous root over the long winter, one day, following a few spring rains, I was woken up by a genial wind as soft as a feather. When I smelled the sweet fragrance of the moist earth, I knew that spring had returned to the world!

“Then I excitedly stretched out and poked through the surface of the soil, whereupon I heard a charming song accompanying the fragrance That was the spring wind using a splendid song to awaken the earth! A song more harmonious than that has never been heard! As I listened, I was entirely filled with the energy of life

“As I joyfully grew, I unwittingly picked up the song of the spring. Now, every time I bloom, I spontaneously start to sing it.”

Listening to the Lily’s vivid account, the Foundling feels as though he can

actually smell the fragrant earth and feel the genial wind caressing him, as if somehow he had been transported into that sumptuous spring day.

Having heard so much sincere praise, the Flowers decide to tell Abo and the Foundling, their friends from afar, a marvelous and lovely story

“This story was brought here by the spring wind from a pure land far, far away,” say the Hyacinth in fine fettle. After clearing his throat, he continues, “Coming or going, the original nature is always pure!”

“Coming or going, the original nature is always pure!” chime in the other flowers on the meadow.

“The supremely genial sound of the spring wind is euphonious beyond description. We still remember that pure and distant song! Perhaps it’s because the story contained in that verse is so wonderful!” mirthfully chime in the bright orange Chrysanthemums, as if still hearing the song of the spring wind.

“Coming or going, the original nature is always pure” says Abo while contemplating the meaning of this verse interpreted for him by the Foundling.

“What is the meaning of this verse?” asks the Foundling.

“It means that our original nature comes from a place of purity, and therefore ultimately returns to purity. This is what the spring wind is telling us,” explains the sweet-natured Hyacinth.

“Then the Spring Wind told an inconceivably marvelous story. After hearing it we praised it endlessly!” Imitating the genial voice of the Spring Wind, the Lily continues:

“In the boundless cosmos, this vast sea of stars, this little planet of ours is but a grain of sand.”

“Smaller than even a speck of dust!” chime in the Chrysanthemums.



“That’s right! And a thousand of these tiny worlds make up a lesser chiliocosm; a thousand lesser chiliocosms make up a medium chiliocosm; a thousand medium chiliocosms make up a greater chiliocosm; and three thousand greater chiliocosms are contained in the Fragrant Sea”

The lovely voice of the Lily notwithstanding, the Foundling can’t help but to exclaim:

“Wow! Not sure I can wrap my head around such figures!”

“And how could it be otherwise? That’s exactly what I thought when I first heard this story, but afterwards it all made perfect sense!” chime in the Chrysanthemums once more.

“You Chrysanthemums can’t keep quiet for even a moment. Perhaps that’s your nature, but please stop interrupting and let the Lilies continue their story!” reprimands the light purple Carnation.

Indeed, chrysanthemums are mischievous by nature. Seeing the light-yellow Chrysanthemum nonchalantly swaying in the wind, the Foundling can’t help but laugh. Flashing a graceful smile, the Lily continues her tale:

“It’s said that the Fragrant Sea is composed of the pleasant scent of virtue and merit. This is what the Spring Wind told us at that time. He also told us that a great many fragrant seas make up a world sea; and innumerable world seas make up a universe. Most amazing of all, the all-pervading universe rests on a vast, pure, and brilliant stamen!”

“A brilliant stamen? What’s that?” asks the Foundling.

“At that time, the Spring Wind presented this analogy — ” leisurely states the Lily. “The stamen is the projecting structure in the center of the flower that produces pollen. Take a look. Can you see it? It’s because of these minuscule pollen granules that the stamen is said to harbor boundless life-energy. By understanding this you gain insight into the mystery of the

universe. The Spring Wind says that this planet of ours was originally a granule of pollen on a brilliant stamen.”

Hearing all this recounted by the Foundling, a lovely wavelet ripples through Abo’s heart, whereupon he puts his face right next to the flowers to get a close look at their stamens.

“It’s true! There really are innumerable tiny granules of pollen on the stamens! And they have a glittering golden radiance!” declares Abo with childlike surprise.

“That’s right! Our pollen granules really are golden yellow,” confirms the Lily with an even brighter smile.

Then the light-yellow Chrysanthemum spontaneously say:

“I remember that when the Spring Wind got to this point in the story he asked us, ‘Do you think that soil is black and dirty?’”

“Sure do! Dirt is dirty!” blurts out the Foundling.

“Ah-hah! You think just like we did!” jeers the impish Chrysanthemum, eliciting a smile from the other flowers.

“How so?” asks the Foundling confusedly, anxious for an explanation.

Seeing the Foundling’s urgency and embarrassment, everybody laughs even louder. When the laughter finally subsides, the Lily slowly explains:

“This planet is like a tiny granule of golden pollen on a stamen. That’s why the Spring Wind went to such great lengths to emphasize that pollen is the source of all things, and that this entire planet came from a single golden granule of pollen! Amazing, isn’t it?”

“So this is what is meant by ‘Coming or going, the original nature is always pure’” announces the Chrysanthemum.

In the gentle morning wind, the Foundling leisurely recounts to Abo all that was said, whereupon Abo mentally enters into a placid and fragrant sea of



glittering stars Like a splendid flash of lightning, the Chrysanthemum's words penetrate deep into Abo's psyche. After thinking for a good while, Abo asks the Foundling to convey a question:

"So then, how did a single granule of pollen turn into this dusty planet of ours?"

"It's like this: The golden pollen floated far away from the pure and radiant stamen. After arriving at some distant universe, it gradually became contaminated with dust"

"As soon as it was contaminated, it took on the color of dust!" interjects the Chrysanthemum. "Over the course of countless aeons, the contaminated pollen which was lighter rose upwards and become heaven; and the contaminated pollen which was heavier went downwards and became the earth. That's how this planet came into being!"

As the breeze gently caresses the high meadows, and the flowers faintly give off their fragrance, the Spring Wind's marvelous story transports Abo into a distant and silent state of primal chaos Then the Lily's bright voice reverberates in the wind:

"I still recall the gentle tone with which the Spring Wind urged us, 'Use your spiritual vision to understand and experience this! The vicissitudes of the universe are marvelous indeed!' Such a profound mystery defies description; it exceeds the range of vision of the physical eye."

"'This is something you need to understand' exhorted the Spring Wind. 'This planet you rely upon for your very existence is not mere dirt; rather it's akin to a great treasure chest filled with gold! This is the mystery of the universe, so hard to comprehend!'" leisurely recalls the Lily.

"Truly amazing! Abo, can you imagine that?" marvels the Foundling after recounting the flowers' conversation.

“Indeed! Really inconceivable! We depend on the land, for it nurtures all life; yet few people even notice this, let alone praise the land; and city dwellers tend to look upon soil as something dirty! It seems that only farmers revere the soil.” Thinking aloud, with a glittering expression on his face, Abo heartily praises:

“Thanks to the Spring Wind, today I finally understand that this firm soil below my feet arose from that fragrant stamen and its pollen. How incredible! Foundling, do you get it? Just like I was once a child and then a youth, this soil was once like glittering gold!”

Though not quite comprehending Abo’s joy, the Foundling is deeply moved by the sight of that face wizened by time and projecting such extraordinary brilliance. As a result, the Foundling joyously recollects how his dear friends—the grass, the flowers, the trees—sing in the spring.

“Hey!” calls out the Chrysanthemum to Abo and the Foundling, still deep in thought.

“I suddenly remember something you’re sure to find interesting. This is another secret told to us by the Spring Wind! It’s said that humans were originally radiant and could fly through space. Flying far away from their homeland, they reached this planet, which was still being formed. At that time, the planet was covered with a thin layer of savory earth. They tasted it and found it to their liking. Some liked it so much that they greedily kept on eating it, as a result of which their luster faded, they became heavy, and they lost their ability to fly!”

“Oh? So what happened next?” asks the Foundling, anxious about the fate of those celestial beings.

“Afterwards, they had no choice but to remain on the earth!” blurts out



the Rhododendron, beating the Chrysanthemum to the punch. “Then they kept on eating the savory earth until there was no more left. After that, they gradually learned how to cultivate the land and began to eat fruits and vegetables.”

Utterly fascinated, Abo and the Foundling are dumbstruck.

“So then — what’s the purpose of the soil?” asks the Lily, looking about for an answer for some time before smiling and stating, “To bring boundless benefits to all creatures!”

“The Spring Wind also told us, ‘Humans are very fond of variety and abundance; some grow melons, while others plant trees; all of this requires soil, which started out as pollen. Thus, only when all the human beings inhabiting the earth have purified their hearts and minds will it be possible for the soil to revert to its original state—pollen!’ adds the Rhododendron.”

“Foundling, now you understand the meaning of ‘Coming or going, the original nature is always pure’! For the soil to recover its golden appearance, you have to use your heart and mind!” add the Chrysanthemum, unable to remain silent for even a moment.

“That’s right! Foundling, if people understood that the soil actually originated from the fragrant pollen emitted by a flower stamen of such boundless beauty, then they would no longer hold the soil in such contempt and have such a low regard for the earth. As a result, they would be grateful and full of joy!” explains the gracefully swaying Lily. “Whatever beings come to this world, at the time of their birth they are endowed with radiance. But over time this becomes contaminated and fades away. That’s why the Spring Wind has come from a distant world to exhort us and inform us ‘Coming or going, the original nature is always pure’ For we were originally pure spiritual beings; our ultimate goal is to return to that state of original

purity, to that brilliant pollen! That is our original homeland, the place of ultimate bliss!”

The intriguing story and exhortation reverberate throughout the deepest recesses of Abo’s soul

As the genial rays of the setting sun come teeming down on the high meadows, the grass and flowers all take on a golden-yellow tint!

*

By the time they return from the highland meadows, the city is already illuminated by the light of innumerable lamps. The Foundling excitedly rushes Abo to have a bite and freshen up, lest they be late for tonight’s performance.

“Foundling, I never knew you were so fond of theater!”

“Sure am! It’s a very enjoyable supplement to experiencing nature!” replies the Foundling, then considering for a moment. “I’m sure that Director Fuhua also knows how to listen to nature!”

Inspired by the Foundling’s remarks, Abo states:

“Could it be that the flowers in the high meadows were waiting for Fuhua?”

The Foundling in hand and a big smile on his face, Abo makes his way through the city streets and arrives at the square used for threshing and drying rice.

Taking the same seat as on the first night and placing the Foundling on his knee, Abo quietly waits

Finally, the stage lights flash three times.

Fuhua walks onto the stage and says with his magnetic voice:



“Heaven and earth—the guesthouse of all creation. Time—a traveler traversing through the ages.

“While taking a break from your hoeing and plowing, as if lying down and dreaming under the Bodhi Tree, when all the tassels of rice are fast asleep under a silvery river of moonlight, you may have heard deep within your heart a roaming celestial body calling out from beyond the horizon — ‘Go home! Go home!’

“I hope that one day you will be blessed with the sight of this map pointing out the direction to that boundless and beautiful Arcadian homeland.

“Now it’s time to open your hearts and minds, and enter into the legendary garden of the Vagrant”

As the sonorous sound of the introduction fades away, the story of the second night gradually unfolds —

The Second Night—The Scion Drifter

△ Arcadia

(With Arcadia as the background and the forested mountains beyond the fields as the foreground, several children run out; a number of celestial beings saunter about in the distance.)

Celestial Being A: (singing)

The willow-wind swoops low to caress the surface of the water,
On the slopes outside the city gaudy red,
The colored streamer of a celestial maiden on a spring day;
A merle singing in the ravine,
Squirrels capering on the tree branches;
The lazy sentiment of a spring day
Drifts through the city streets.

Celestial Being B: (speaking)

Unable to resist the alluring scenery,
Several mischievous kids
Steal out of the city.

Celestial Being C: (singing)

Flowers blooming unbridled,
Dainty and charming;
Yellow butterflies dancing in unison amongst the flowers,
No worries,
Charming and at ease,
Arousing the children to play,



Slim and graceful in form,
 Leaping about in the beguiling forest of illusion on
 The shore of that cold, cold water.

(Music continues as day turns to night and a bright moon rises)

Celestial Being A: (speaking)

The queen of night suddenly dons her black gown enveloping everything in
 darkness,
 Children fond of play,
 Hearts overflowing with dreams galore;
 Time passing,
 Daylight swallowed up inch by inch,
 Obscuring all trace of the way home,
 In an instant.

(Celestial beings slowly leave the stage; anxiously groping in the dark, the
 children sing.)

Child A: (singing)

A star-filled night,
 Pitch-black ravines and dales,
 Traps all about.

Child B: (speaking)

Where is the way home?
 Where is that bright light?
 Children far from home we have lost the way.

Children: (singing in chorus)

Wandering on and on footsteps obscuring the sound of flowing water,
Repeatedly gazing off into the distance towards the stars on the horizon;
Crossing peak after peak,
Through inexhaustible darkness;
Despair in the endless wilderness,
Yellow leaves one by one,
Leave the tree and flutter through space.

(Under the starry sky, the children wander further and further onwards. The second scene slowly unfolds to the sound of lamentful music.)

△ The city of Sarathi

(A city-state in the desert; two stone lions squat in front of a regal mansion. The Scion Drifter walks alone in the dim predawn light. Chilled by a cool morning breeze, he pulls up his lapel and looks towards the morning light arising in the east.)

Scion: Ah! The long night is over; another sleepless night! (lowers head and mutters) Anyone who has never passed a sleepless night doesn't know what it means to suffer!

(Candraprabha quickly approaches, anxiously searching for someone; collides with the Scion and hastily turns around.)

Candraprabha: Truly sorry about bumping into you like that



(The Scion shakes his head and makes a wry smile before looking down and continuing on his way. Candraprabha promptly calls out to him.)

Candraprabha: Brother, wait a moment!

(The Scion stops and looks back.)

Candraprabha: May I ask, have you seen a group of people led by an elderly man?

(The Scion silently shakes his head. Candraprabha is disappointed, but before he can ask any more questions he notices the forlorn look on the man's face and is filled with pity.)

Candraprabha: Brother, why are you so weary and sorrowful? You look familiar. Can you tell me who you are? Where are you from?

(Somewhat surprised, as the Scion looks up at Candraprabha, his countenance somewhat brightens. Puzzled, he murmurs to himself.)

Scion: (dejectedly) Who am I? Where am I from?
(turning around and walking slowly; slowly singing)

Leaving in droves,
Leaf by leaf,
You follow the wind home;
Like a tiny boat,
Tossed about on the waves;

Riding a leaf,
Cool and refreshing.
Ever drifting about,
Pervasive doubt,
Less strong than wine.
A butterfly
Gently alighting,
Letting out
A sigh.

Heavenly maidens yet to arrive,
Forest overflowing with autumn tints;
Like spirited flowers,
Passing by,
Filling the sky, quietly floating up, dropping,
Raining down.
Who can remain in that jade green,
Early youth,
Adding autumn days,
So charming?
Who can possess a splendid
Old age?
Dancing with the wind as brilliant as
The rosy clouds of dawn.

Alas head low, pacing,
A stranger;



From where
 Have you drifted?
 Oh so bleak,
 Autumn wind.
 I have drifted in from beyond the mountains,
 Full of sorrow,
 Like a leaf.

(The Scion turns towards Candraprabha.)

Scion: Alas, you can't help me!

Candraprabha: (confusedly) What? Brother, what are you talking about?

Scion: (head lowered, walking away, lightly sighing, speaking to himself)
 Alas! If only in my youth I had not been so foolish and obsessed with transient pleasures, then I would never have secretly gone off with that merchant caravan. Now I have been roaming about, passing through countless cities, countries, and wild places, apart from my dear father for over 20 years. Sleeping rough, tears of despair moistening my cheeks. When my money runs out, I might go without food for three days in a row. My body feels as heavy as a rock, but I can bear it. What's most difficult is having no one to rely on. Now I continually tread along the precipice of despair. Neither heaven nor earth can help me. (turns around and walks in the other direction) Who am I? Where am I from? Who am I? I
 (continues muttering to himself)

Candraprabha: Hey! Hey!

(The Scion ignores Candrababha, approaches the stone lions, and stares blankly towards the palatial mansion.)

Scion: (to himself) Such wealthy people are always in need of cleaners. Let me take a rest and think it over.

(Having made up his mind, the Scion huddles up at the feet of one of the stone lions and falls asleep Still standing in the same place, at a loss as to how to help, Candrababha recommences his search as the light slowly fades.)

(A faint, light-blue beam of light falls on the Scion, now fitfully asleep. As a light gradually brightens in another part of the stage, the faint sound of children's laughter is sporadically heard.

Three maidservants accompany an opulently dressed boy; one of the maidservants carries a birdcage, next to whom a group of children laugh and play. The opulently dressed boy keeps pestering the maidservant to give him the canary inside the cage. The maidservant teasingly refuses, causing the boy to throw a tantrum.)

Little Boy: Let me play with it! Let me play with it! Give me the canary! Give it to me!

(The maidservant smilingly gives it to him. After rocking the cage a few times, the boy opens it and reaches for the canary.)

Little Boy: Drats! The canary has flown off. Don't go! Canary! Come back!



(As the boy pursues the canary, the laughter of the other children trails off and the light in this section of the stages fades to dark.

From behind the curtain there emerge the clip-clop of horse hooves and the voice of a man calling out, “My boy! My boy! Where are you? Your father has been looking for you for many years now!

Woken up by the sound of the horse’s hooves, the Scion feels as though a pair of hands is stroking his cheeks.)

Grandee of Sarathi: (kindly) Young man, why are you sleeping here?

(Aroused from sleep, the Scion Drifter looks up. Startled by the imposing sight of the Grandee, he jumps to his feet and steps back a few steps.)

Scion: (to himself) This man must be a king or someone as important as a king, for he has such a stately mansion. Surely a lowly fellow like me doesn’t belong here! I’d better get out of here while I still have a chance! I’ll go to the place where the poor congregate in search of work. Otherwise, this imposing grandee may well seize me and force me to perform hard labor for the rest of my life; what a horrible fate that would be!

(Thinking in this way, the Scion fearfully dashes off, whereupon the Grandee shouts out a command to his nearby servants.)

Grandee: (urgently) Quick! Catch that man and bring him back!

(The servants quickly catch up to and lay hold of the Scion.)

Servant: (pleased with himself) Where are you running off to? Come on, our master wants to see you.

Scion: (fearfully shouting) I have nothing to do with you people; what do you want with me?

(Overcome by fear and panic, as soon as he is brought before the Grandee, the Scion faints and falls to the ground. As the Grandee looks on in pity, Candraprabha fortuitously arrives on the scene and runs over.)

Candraprabha: (anxiously) Why have you seized him?

Grandee: (towards the servants) Release him! Let him go as he pleases.

(One of the servants splashes the Scion with a bucket of water. Regaining consciousness, the Scion cowers on the ground.)

Servant: You may go! We wanted to give you a safe place to stay, but you don't want it. What a pity!

(Dazed and confused, the Scion slowly stands up and looks cautiously at the Grandee before dashing off towards skid row in search of food and clothing. Watching the Scion heading off into the distance, the Grandee sighs deeply to himself. Sarvajna and the Treasure Seekers arrive on the scene; Candraprabha rushes forward.)

Candraprabha: Wow! Master Sarvajna, I'm over here! I've finally found you!



(Candraprabha and Sarvajna smile and greet each other by grasping each other's hands.)

Sarvajna: Wow! Grandee, how is it you have come here?

Grandee: It really is you! Sarvajna, so good to run into you here.

Candraprabha: (surprised) Huh? You know each other?

Sarvajna: That's right! The Grandee of Sarathi is both wealthy and wise; we've been friends for decades. (turning to the Grandee) I haven't seen you for so long. Why the sad face?

Grandee: Ah, it's a long story

Candraprabha: (interjecting) What happened just now? Why did you seize that man and then let him go?

Grandee: (with a kind but sad smile) Alas — such a long story. Sarvajna, as you know, this is not my native place. I came here some time ago in search of my long lost son.

Candraprabha: In search of your long lost son?

Sarvajna: (surprised) Do you mean that boy of yours disappeared?

Grandee: (sadly) That's right. At that time he was so young, foolish, and fond of play; then one day he disappeared. That was over 20 years ago, and I've never told anyone about it

I've kept it all to myself. And now I have all this wealth—gold, silver, lapis lazuli, pearls, agate, and hundreds of servants—yet I have found no one worthy of inheriting all this. Year in and year out I've searched far and wide, trying to find my beloved son so that he can inherit my property.

Candraprabha: Just now

Grandee: That man who was sleeping here moments ago—he is my dear son.

Candrababha: (doubtfully) But he doesn't seem to recognize you. Are you sure he's your son?

Grandee: (looking in the direction by which his son left) He is indeed. After all these years he still has the dignified look of nobility. Even though I haven't seen him for so long, I instantly recognized him.

Candrababha: But why then did he faint when he saw you?

Sarvajna: (kindly) He's still a foolish boy. After so many years he doesn't recognize his own father.

Grandee: (earnestly) That's right. Having drifted around for over 20 years, he has forgotten his noble origins and doesn't even recognize me; nor does he have any inkling about this great fortune he stands to inherit. He's been struggling to eke out a living for so many years now that his heart has become instilled with fear and dread. When I caught sight of him moments ago I was overcome with joy. But when he fled in terror I thought I'd better send some servants to catch him and bring him back, lest he disappear again. Little did I know that he would be so frightened that he would faint on the spot.

Candrababha: (confusedly) But if he really is your long lost son, then why did you let him leave just now?

Grandee: After living the life of a vagrant for so many years, he has developed a kind of inferiority complex. So even if we did drag him back, it would be of no use.

Candrababha: (doubtfully) Huh? Do you mean you're just going to let him drift off again?

Grandee: Surely not. I'll never give up on him. But I'll have to employ some skillful means to lure him back and gradually bring him around.

Candrababha: (totally confused) Skillful means?



Sarvajna: Candrababha, for the Grandee, this won't be difficult.

(The Grandee smilingly waves over two servants.)

Grandee: After two days, go and make friends with that man. Afterwards, when the time is right, tell him that you know a place that is in desperate need of workers, and that the pay is three times the normal wage. If he agrees to come, then bring him in through the rear entrance, so that he doesn't become suspicious or alarmed. When he asks what kind of work needs to be done, then tell him that he is to haul away excrement, and that for the time being the two of you will be doing the same. (waves off the two servants and turns to Sarvajna) Remarkable that we should run into one another in a foreign land. Stay at my place and rest for a few days!

Sarvajna: Alright! Then I'll have a chance to see how you're going to reform that long lost son of yours!

(The Grandee leads everybody into his mansion. Candrababha walks slowly behind, repeatedly looking in the direction the Scion took, as if thinking of something.)

Candrababha: (singing)

A prodigal son, bereft of property wandering about, a stranger to himself,
All day long among the red dust of the world not knowing his own wealth.

(Someone inside calls for Candrababha; lights go out.)

△ Skid row

(On skid row, the Scion chats with the two servants.)

Scion: (sighing deeply) People sure are strange. They're always after something, but if by chance they get it, it only brings more trouble!

Servant A: Are you still looking for work and a place to stay?

Scion: Oh, man! Easier said than done!

Servant B: (exchanging a wink with the other servant) We know about a man urgently in need of some workers. The pay is great—three times the normal wage—and it includes room and board. Let's go together. How about it?

Scion: (dubiously) What do we have to do to get such good pay?

Servant A: It's a wealthy man in urgent need of some workers to carry away excrement. But it's not easy to find people willing to do such work. Also, I've heard that he's a good boss and treats his workers well.

Scion: Well — if he's a good boss and it's proper work, let's give it a try!

Servant B: Alright! Let's go!

(The Scion and the two servants leave the stage; stage goes dark.)

△ Behind the mansion

(Behind the mansion, wearing tattered and soiled clothing, the Scion and the two servants work hard hauling away excrement. Sarvajna and Candraprabha quietly observe from one side of the veranda.)

Candraprabha: He's been here for some time now. Why doesn't the Grandee reveal his identity?

Sarvajna: (thinking deeply) No hurry. He's waiting for the right time. You



see, this man still hasn't realized his noble provenance. The Grandee is waiting for him to overcome his inferiority complex —

(As the Scion toils on, the stage slowly darkens; when the lights come back on, the others are resting, but the Scion is diligently hauling water. Wearing coarse, soiled clothes and carrying the equipment used for hauling excrement, the Grandee approaches the Scion.)

Grandee: We need to brace up and work hard. Don't be lazy. (turning towards the Scion) Young man, I've noticed that you are a good worker. You should continue working here; I'll give you a better job, and I'll increase your wages; I want to encourage you to stay.

Scion: (cordially) Thank you! You are very kind. (lowers head and continues working)

Grandee: (stooping down and working with the Scion) It seems that you have no family here. What about your family?

Scion: (sadly) Oh, it's such a long story. I've been a drifter for so long now, I can't even remember my family or where I'm from. All I remember is that when I was very young, I was so very fond of play and adventure that one day I followed a merchant caravan on its way out of the city. I ended up getting lost, and I couldn't find my way back home. Since that time, I've been continuously wandering about (reminiscing) All I can remember is my kindly father. Sometimes I see him indistinctly in a dream; I wonder where he is, but I have no idea! I miss him so much, but all I can do is call out to him in my dreams. But (looks up at Grandee, as if he wants to say something, but falls silent)

Grandee: (concernedly) But what?

Scion: (lowers head)

Grandee: Come now, tell me! — (gently places right hand on the Scion's shoulder)

Scion: (plucking up his courage) But, you remind me of my father
(bashfully) Oh, sorry! I shouldn't have said that.

Grandee: (flashing an excited expression) How so? As it turns out, I myself lost my son long ago. I miss him very much, just like you miss your father.
(regaining his composure) Young man, for the time being, you can regard me as your father. How about it?

Scion: (pleasantly surprised) How How could I be so presumptuous?

Grandee: (adamantly) I really would be pleased if you would regard me as your father.

Everyone on stage:

This is good indeed!

He misses his son, you miss your father. What could be better!

So fine, so fine indeed!

Servant A: The master is waiting for your answer!

Servant B: Just call him "father"!

Scion: (timidly) Father — Father —

Grandee: (shedding a tear) Ah! Son, I'm so happy to have you here with me.

Scion: (excitedly) I feel so lucky to have you as my father!

Grandee: (genially) Such a fine son, such a fine son!

(Everyone cheers as Sarvajna and the others smilingly leave the stage; stage darkens.)



△ The inner courtyard

(Alone on the manor grounds, the Scion deeply reflects. The Grandee and Sarvajna stand next to a lotus pond some distance away.)

Sarvajna: Under your edifying guidance, this man's bearing has gradually become quite dignified. He trusts and respects you. It seems that the time to reveal your true identity has arrived.

Grandee: Ah, Sarvajna. He and I sure have become quite close. We get along perfectly well. It does seem that it's nearly time for me to reveal the true state of affairs. (Calls over a servant and whispers in his ear; servant nods and goes off.)

(In the distance, the Scion slowly paces back and forth, plaintively gazing into the distance.)

Scion: (reflectively to himself) The Grandee really is like a father to me. He's so noble and kind, and he treats me as though I were his own son. Formerly, I was hopelessly wandering about, but due to his care and guidance, I finally feel happy and settled. But alas! Ultimately I'm an outsider living in someone else's house. How could I ever be considered equal to his real son?

(Suddenly overcome with sadness, he spontaneous sings.)

A cold winter night sunk in sleep spirit dreaming, heart roaming about,
Perhaps happily musing below a flowering tree perhaps silently
contemplating at some distant headwater,

Perhaps back home, heart filled with joy perhaps far from home, sadly

thinking of fall,

Startled awake by the morning bell a brief rest courtesy of a dream.

(Suddenly drums beat loudly; everyone hastily assembles.)

Scion: (surprised) What's happened?

Servant: The Grandee wants everyone to assemble, for he is going to make an important announcement

(Formally dressed and with an august bearing, the Grandee proceeds to the center of the stage, whereupon everyone falls silent. The Scion suddenly discovers —)

Scion: Wow! Is that the Grandee?

Grandee: (looking over the entire assembly) Today I have a very important announcement to make. After many years of searching, I have finally found my long lost son.

(Audience is joyously abuzz. After a moment of silence, the Grandee continues —)

Grandee: I'm now an old man, and the time has arrived for me to hand over all my property to my son. That's why I have convened this assembly today.

(Pausing, the Grandee beckons to the Scion.

Astonished and confused, the Scion looks around. After some encouragement from Sarvajna, he timidly approaches the Grandee.)



Grandee: (benevolently) Son, my dear son! You are my son who disappeared so many years ago!

Scion: (astonished) What?

Grandee: Son! You are my legitimate heir. Today I am turning all the family property over to you. Take good care of it!

Scion: (incredulously looking at the Grandee) Father is it really you?

(A dazzling light suddenly illuminates the Scion Drifter. After living the life of an impoverished vagabond for so long, he finally realizes his noble provenance. Remembering all he has been through, he feels as though he is awakening from a long dream, as innumerable emotions spontaneously well up in his heart.)

Scion: (singing)

Dust occluding the mirror bright,
Whence does it alight?
All those hindrances of the mind,
Whence do they unbind?

From so much fine dust,
Who can make out the great trichiliocosm?
From an illusory flower,
Who can find the way home?

Amidst the flowers, a butterfly
Flits in from a dream;
Attached to the flowers,

Reluctant to depart.

Red roses born of lust,
Opulent adornment formed of ignorance,
Attire red as fire;
My canary,
Intoxicated with the scent of flowers,
Slumbering deeply in the sights and sounds of spring.

Wake up my canary,
See the solemn hills and blue water;
On the majestic peak,
A pure white lotus
Already blooms.

Wake up my canary,
Forthwith break through the dust;
Listen closely to the drum of the Dharma.
In the flower-adornment realm,
A wise man
Expounds the scriptures;
Awakening those covered in dust.

(While singing, a broad smile appears on the Scion's face. Overjoyed, he goes over to the Grandee and hugs him.)

Scion: (ebulliently) Father, it really is you! My dear father!



(Praise and cheers arise from the assembly.)

Candraprabha: (emotionally) Ah! After roaming about for so many years, the Scion Drifter finally recognizes his father and realizes his noble heritage. Look! He's brimming over with joy. He's now in possession of all that wealth, even though he never expected it.

Everyone on stage: (singing)

A sun with a physical body drops to the valley floor,

A new moon with a spiritual body slowly rises up from the valley floor;

Earlier a hireling aimlessly wandering, no place to call home,

Today the master of all this wealth.

Earlier clad in rags coursing through samsara,

Today on the throne of the Tathagata the nirmanakaya of the triple realm.

A sun with a physical body drops to the valley floor,

A new moon with a spiritual body slowly rises up from the valley floor.

— Curtain closes —



17 23

The Nineteenth—The Treasure Trove

The Earth. This is the ultimate support of all creation. Sentient beings appear on this world-stage in countless forms—now a monarch or a high official; now an ant or perhaps even a leaf Having played so many roles over innumerable aeons, we have all stored up a great treasury of countless marks, formative traces as vast as the sea.

Now despite the ubiquitous presence of these conditioning marks, all sentient beings are endowed with the capacity to manifest whatever they can conceive of, even a buddha-land with all its wonderful attributes. For our situation and lot in life are a manifestation of the mind. Thus, when the mind is imbued with love, joy, and inspiration, then these become the creative forces of the world we inhabit





Fivefold Buddha Land

Abo also enjoys the sight of the paddy fields when they are lying fallow. Early one morning, Abo walks barefoot through the fallow fields, using the soles of his feet to carefully feel the temperature of the earth.

Moistened by the morning dew, the soil exudes its peculiar fragrance, which mixes with the rustic scent of the rice stalks and fills the vast expanse of fields. Imbibing this distinctive fragrance, the Foundling feels thoroughly relaxed and comfortable.

Strolling through the fields, Abo squats down to smell the soil and to see if any worms or crickets are poking out of the ground. He also takes the opportunity to observe the colorful wildflowers which have found their chance to sprout All these normally insignificant items are now on center stage.

Walking barefoot through field after field, Abo's inner barometer fluctuates in accordance with the temperature and moisture of the soil, continuously monitored by his sensitive feet.

Following the harvest, the yellow-gold waves are no longer seen. The paddy fields are deserted, except for the ever-present wind blowing far and wide and the occasional birds alighting to glean the grains left behind. Following the plentiful harvest, the fields seem to have gone into hibernation.

"Take a close look, and you'll see that the land is never in a state of complete quiescence," Abo says to himself while releasing the Foundling's long string, allowing him to ride the morning wind high up into the blue sky.

"Abo, when will the farmers return to the fields?" spontaneously asks the Foundling, struck by the contrast between the present scene and the usual

sight of farmers busy in the fields.

“In another month or two these fields will again be alive with the boisterous sound of weeding, plowing, irrigating, and sowing.”

“So long? Are they lazy?”

“Not at all!” says Abo smilingly. “They’re letting the soil take a rest! After the harvest, you have to leave the fields fallow so that the soil has a chance to recover its fertility; it also allows the sun to kill off the eggs of harmful insects. You see, if the fields don’t take a rest, then they’ll become worn out and won’t produce good grain.”

“Oh, I see! The fields are taking a break!” the Foundling says with surprise.

“You see, because they rely on the land for their subsistence, farmers have great respect for nature. Since they work closely with the land, they understand the subtle pulse of nature; they also know that trying to force the land to yield more than it should, only depletes the vitality of the soil. This is the key to sustainable agriculture.

Abo’s words inspire the Foundling to peer down and closely observe the vast expanse of paddy fields crisscrossed with connecting paths.

As the fresh dew refracts the soft rays of the morning sun throughout the fields, the earth takes on a light golden sheen. Admiring the fallow fields shimmering with abundant vitality, the Foundling spontaneously asks:

“Oh Mother Earth! How is it that you never stop giving and ask for nothing in return?”

As the land continues to soak in the silent rays of the sun, the only thing moving on the broad expanse of fallow fields is the Foundling’s crisp shadow briskly skipping about.

Leisurely walking towards the center of the paddy fields, Abo arrives at the



old banyan tree where the farmers customarily take a rest.

Sitting in the shadow of the lush banyan tree, as the golden light of early morning floods the paddy fields, Abo recalls the remarkable story told by the flowers in the highland meadows.

“Simply inconceivable! This great earth—the source of nourishment for all creation—began as a bright golden granule of pollen” Abo spontaneously says to himself in a quiet tone of praise.

As the sparrows on top of the banyan tree gently banter, the light buzz of the cicadas resonates through space and the tiny grasshoppers gambol amongst the weeds. Near the pea vines sporting red and white flowers, a straw man looks out towards the lush, mist-shrouded foothills in the distance.

Having entered a state of inward tranquility, Abo perceives the subtle activity of life all around him. Thanks to the Foundling, in recent days Abo has deepened his understanding of the land—and all creation. What’s more, he now fully appreciates that even when things appear to be in a state of quiescence, inwardly their spirits are nonetheless vibrantly active in accordance with their essential nature. As a result, whenever his heart and mind are sufficiently tranquil, the thousand subtle sounds of nature ensconced in the wind begin to leisurely pluck his heartstrings. In fact, Abo is presently tuning into the quiet pulsation of the earth.

Stroked by the morning wind, the land breathes its lightly fragrant breath, much to the delight of the lush banyan. As the tall weeds noisily rustle about, the forested foothills exhale a gauzy mist Abo is suddenly struck by the boundless clarity of his sense of vision

Right before his eyes, all creation extends in a lush array—innumerable flowers, plants, and trees vivaciously stretching out; birds and beasts of

all kinds moving about; humans tilling the land, building houses, giving lectures, seeking the way, doing business, traveling all depending on the same great earth.

Silently observing, Abo clearly perceives the boundless variation of life— Though full of the same vitality, each tree species has its own branch structure and leaf shape; each bird species its own distinctive color and call; each species of water plant at the bottom of the sea its own distinctive form. The same life-force animates the delicate butterflies with their variously colored wings; the strangely shaped wild mushrooms; the ferns hanging to the cliffs; the flowing water with its distinctive grain human beings busily going about their infinitely various lives. In Abo's sensitive eyes appear every type of experience imaginable—joy, sorrow, suspicion, sincerity, dejection, hope

“Abo, how is it that the beings living in the same place are all so different from one another?” curiously asks the Foundling.

“Plant melons, get melons; plant beans, get beans,” replies a deeply resounding voice, even before Abo has a chance to reply.

“It's the same with life. It all depends on your ability to maintain a positive and optimistic attitude with respect to everything in the world.”

“Positive and optimistic attitude” ruminates Abo.

“The results all depend on the mind!” again proclaims that distant voice resounding throughout space. “Depending on various states of consciousness the land manifests in different forms. Yet the same land is what supports all beings. Moreover, beings develop in accordance with the power of their aspirations and vows. Thus all these different life forms you see in the world, as well as the environments in which they exist, all come into being through aspiration and the results of that aspiration accumulated over innumerable



lifetimes!”

“Wow! Such diversity in this great chiliocosm! That’s why I encountered all those incredibly varied sights on my way here!” exclaims the Foundling in a moment of illumination.

“What? How so?” asks Abo, curious to hear more.

“Probably just the exuberance of youth! Nothing in comparison with that vast expression in your eyes!” replies the Foundling, his memory stirred by a light wind, his distant voice lightly fluttering through space.

“The Earth is eternally full of the vitality of youth. In addition to supporting innumerable life forms, it continually serves as the basis for the arising of new beings—this is the miraculous movement of life. There’s no need to worry about the seedlings and bulbs getting ready to sprout, or about the tender cicada larvae ensconced in the summer soil For when the time is right, they gleefully surge forth, as if drawn out by the energy present in the love and joy of the earth.

“As to whether a certain place is lonely or crowded, elegant or celestial, that all depends on the actions of the beings that live there!”

Following the Foundling’s moderate, melodic pace, Abo comes to appreciate ever more unexpected aspects of the prolific natural world—

At times, the pond water employs its sound and bright lotus rhyme to quietly interpret the deep and lofty sentiments of the earth; at other times, the forest uses its verdant branches to reveal the imperishable and mysterious topography. At still other times, the wildflowers use their supple stems and fragrant breath to interpret the infinite creativity, joy, and beauty of Mother Earth

Sunlight ripples on the surface of the pond reflecting an ethereal image of lush trees and flowers of a thousand hues. What a miraculous universe this

is, where the moss weaves a thick green carpet!

Whatever life form one can imagine, its inherent nature—whether exuberant, subtle, grand, or gentle—is pure and beautiful. The great earth takes form depending on the various aspirations of its inhabitants; the towering trees require hundreds or thousands of years before they form a mature rain forest, an Arcadia of sustainable beauty.

Hearing so many remarkable scenes described by the Foundling, Abo reflects on how the great earth before his eyes displays a wonderfully supple and lustrous appearance on all sides, engendering a sense of joy and ease in those who behold it.

“On the buddha-land of the second level, everything is boundlessly brilliant. Everything that appears there is the product of the mental disposition of the beings who live there,” whispers Mother Earth, as the Foundling’s tail flutters in the wind. “People should be as stable and supportive as Mother Earth. What’s more, they need to develop their latent abilities, maintain love and joy in their hearts, and let their creativity and inspiration flow forth; then hidden treasures spring up wherever you step.”

Presently, from the firmness of the land Abo perceives that life is not static, but rather is constantly moving forward in a mysteriously subtle way, year upon year, moment upon moment, ever displaying new transformations. Almost imperceptibly, myriads of wondrous phenomena spring forth, as if innumerable joyous notes were sprouting up from beneath the ground, forming into this august and marvelous movement of life

A flash of lightning jolts the paddy fields from their slumber—

“Who can ignore the movement of the seasons and heavenly bodies, and



yet continue to thrive? These changes in time and space have a subtle effect on the seeds. The flowers and paddy patiently wait for the spring to grow again,” states Mother Earth, her resonant voice mixing with the rolling thunder.

“How remarkable!” Abo shouts through the thunder, discovering a colorful glittering light beneath his feet.

As it turns out, this is where heaven and earth have created an ancient mirror boundlessly extending outwards, the hall of mirrors of the boundless universe, formed out of the flourishing diversity of the world.

Looking out into the distance, Abo feels as though he is walking alone through a vast world, while endless scenes appear on the horizon After some time he realizes that while he doesn’t see his own image in the house of mirrors, the mirrored walls follow his every move, continually displaying myriads of different life forms!

“Beings have appeared in this ancient mirror of the buddha-land in countless forms—now a monarch or a high official; now an ant or perhaps even a leaf having played so many roles over innumerable aeons, these beings have all stored up a great treasury of countless marks and attributes,” says Mother Earth in an increasingly distinct voice. “A single thought is like the spindrift, and ceaseless thinking is like an unending wave. But when the wind has subsided and the waves have calmed down, then the mind becomes like a polished mirror clearly reflecting life in all its majestic diversity—big and small; beautiful and kind; it all clearly manifests.”

As the scenes in the mirrors continue to vary from moment to moment, Abo notices a certain feeling slowly welling up inside

“Wow! What are these cute children doing here?” asks the startled Foundling.

In the buddha-land of the third level, just like a house of mirrors, there suddenly appear adorable children diligently polishing the mirror.

“This defiling dust has been accumulating since beginningless time; it’s so very hard to keep it from obscuring this ancient mirror.”

Abo is awestruck by Mother Earth’s profound words of wisdom.

“By sitting alone in the quiet of the night, observing the mind and sweeping away the dust, it’s possible to return the mirror to its original brightness, so that it clearly reflects the mysterious manifestations of all phenomena,” adds Mother Earth in a voice as vast as the universe itself.

“Sweep away the dust and return the mirror to its original brightness?” ruminates Abo.

“That’s right. This mirror of the universe is not merely external; it’s also part and parcel of the mind. Contemplation is the only way to trace the ultimate source of the waves rippling across the mind,” explains a voice which seems to be coming from the mirrors on opposite sides.

“As for the future and the passage of time, only by returning to that original state of holiness and spiritual purity is it possible to avoid being sullied by the dust of the world and to fully appreciate the universe in its entirety.

“When we go through life with the ordinary mind, we discover that all the footprints of time on the river of life are contained in a tiny mustard seed, concentrated like the light of the afternoon sun. This state of original purity is something we have to spend a lifetime seeking!”

While the others think it over, the children finish polishing the ancient mirror.

All of a sudden, a brilliant light illuminates the mind’s eye—

Straightaway, Abo scrutinizes the ancient mirror, impeccably clear and



bright, and notices that it is opening up into multiple layers!

“Wow! What a bountiful treasure!” shouts the wide-eyed Foundling.

A moment later, illuminated by the boundless and brilliant light, there arises from deep within the ground a splendid array of lapis lazuli, silver, crystal, cornelian, coral, etc., each one reflecting the others while copiously emitting a pure light of every conceivable hue. Within the flowery light blooms forth the pure inherent nature of the earth. Then there appears a pulsating light

“After returning to your original state, true wisdom appears as a matter of course!” call out bright golden sound waves continuously issuing forth from under the ground.

“Through the diligent application of meditation to clear away all the defiling dust obscuring the mind, one is no longer bewildered by worldly phenomena and comes to see things as they really are!”

Moved by the earnest admonition of Mother Earth, Abo feels as though his body and mind are being bathed in an indescribably genial sunlight of golden hue. Before Abo’s awe has a chance to subside, the Earth again fills space with light and sound:

“In this matter there is no room for wavering or doubt! As soon as one is thoroughly purified both inwardly and outwardly, then one arrives at the summit of wisdom. Relying on this firm and bright original essence, you will understand the origin and inherent luminosity of all things. In this world, only those who trace things back to their source gain a glimpse of the buddha-land of imperishable wisdom and light.”

The Earth’s genial light and sound gradually draw Abo and the Foundling into her inconceivably pure and marvelous inner reality, as all the light blends into a single mass—

Originally, everything in the universe was pure gold in color, and all

thoughts and phenomena functioned in accordance with this golden essence, just as each season of the year has its own function and appearance in accordance with the amount of sunlight.

“Gold is the latent color of all beings; together with the defiling dust, you get two sides of the same coin,” says Abo in a voice which sounds like that of the Earth.

Abo observes another world, where everything is gold, pure, and auspicious; a place where even a speck of dust is highly esteemed!

“But in the world full of dust, everybody requires gold” Abo insightfully says to himself.

“Endless dust, and endless golden sand. Amidst the dust are found realms of gold!” Abo sees wave upon wave of golden light shooting up from the naked ground, covering every nook and cranny. A wonderful ringing sound fills space; all suffering and affliction ceases

“Sincere giving is the highest expression of wisdom! Diligently fashion yourself and cultivate the field of blessings. Then, when you eat food or wear clothes, you will experience the all-pervading pure reality of the universe and everything in it!”

All the light and sound seems to be self-produced; the distinction between self and world disappears

“Abo! Abo!” several old farmers call out, awakening Abo from his reverie, so real, yet unreal. “Hey, Abo! How can you doze off while flying a kite?”

Hearing their friendly voices and seeing the honest expression in their dark eyes, Abo comes back to himself, looks around, and says with a spontaneous smile:

“Hah-hah! Must have been lulled asleep by that cozy breeze You’re out inspecting the fields?”



“That we are! Even though the fields are lying fallow, we still have to go around and take a look, just to make sure everything is okay,” happily says one of the old farmers. “These fields of ours are so fertile, they’re like a treasure trove; whatever you plant here grows well. It’s never left us hungry!”

“That it is, that it is! A real treasure trove.” leisurely replies Abo, thinking back on his dreamlike experience of moments ago.

Standing on the firm ground, a gentle breeze caressing his face, with the melodious and graceful song of the birds perched on the trees as accompaniment, the autumn cicadas ring out in unison:

“Ci—ca—da—”

Below the banyan tree, the innumerable sound waves continually sent out by the cicadas resonate through the heart, washing clean the mind

*

“Beneath the starlight, I hear the nightingale in the forest, singing an ancient song about his native place.

“This green crag sleeping on the great earth, covered in bamboo, producing a wonderful sound, just like a flute of lustrous jasper, flashing out the joyous glow of life. Here, everyone has everything they need; nothing more, nothing less.

“Ah! Whence has arisen this place of such enchanting beauty?”

Hearing Fuhua’s elegant soliloquy under the night sky, Abo recalls the events of the day, whereupon he looks at the Foundling and smiles.

“Long, long ago, when this world was about to take form The pollen which was lighter rose upwards and became heaven; and the pollen which

was heavier went downwards and became the earth. When heaven and earth were thus complete, this beautiful journey of life began to unfold.” The lithe and resonant voice transports the villagers into the distant past.

“With the unstinting nourishment of Mother Nature, the innumerable life forms which inhabit this vast universe thrived and multiplied, on and on The elegant voice reverberates across the cool square, carried by the evening wind beyond the city and towards the mountain valleys



The Third Night—Imbibing the Rain

△ A mountain valley

Soon after the stars filling the sky see off the genial moonlight, the vault of heaven begins to brighten. Illuminated by the first rays of the rising sun, the verdant meadows in the mountain valleys glitter with energy.

As the balmy sun embraces the wildflowers lost in slumber, the morning dew accumulated on the leaves sparkles brightly, as if sprinkled by some mischievous fairy.

Roused by the call of the sun, the genial and affectionate spring wind slowly wakes up from her wintry dream and unwittingly sways her curvaceous form. Stirred by the wind, the blades of grass in the meadow send out innumerable delicate seeds which fill the sky before boisterously scampering around the bottom of the wind's wavering skirt.

In the wink of an eye, the entire world comes out of hibernation, as the seeds of the wildflowers elatedly enter into the warm and moist bosom of the earth.

“Chu-long—Chu-long—”

Suddenly, roaring thunder and flashing lightning startle the entire mountain valley out of its slumber. Soon a continuous light rain begins to fall, signaling that the frigid winter has been left far behind. Thereupon the thunder booms again, as if announcing that spring has arrived. Soon after the soil is sufficiently moist, the flower seeds scattered about the meadows will sprout and take on a new appearance.

As the first brilliant rays of the rising sun shine down upon the mountains,

rivers, and valleys, the boundless universe takes on a fresh and dashing appearance. Unwilling to remain out of the limelight, a dazzling rainbow of seven hues springs up from the meadow. Thereupon the impish dew, by now satiated with play, tiptoes onto the brilliant bridge of colorful light and ascends back to its abode high up in the clouds.

As long as the sun and moon have been trading places, the wildflower seeds have been sprouting and growing with vigor.

(Early morning; the dew drops calling out to the wind awakens the plants in the meadow. As the plants boisterously greet one another, the meadow is filled with cheer.)

Grandfather Sun: Well, well! Good morning everybody!

Plants: (yawning) Good morning, Grandfather Sun!

Wow! Today your rays are especially warm and balmy!

Listen—The lovely sound of the wind rolling down the mountain!

Ah! Sister Wind must be bringing some wonderful news!

(The plants all quiet down and listen.)

Sister Wind: (singing while approaching)

Last night I bashfully dreamed,

Today I was awoken by tears,

Unable to shake off the clouds and rain of Mount Wu,

Unable to wipe off the defilements and ignorance.

Youth as transitory as the morning dew,

In the wink of an eye the leaves flutter to the ground;



Fallen and withered in life after life,
Day and night anxiously seeking.

Originally as bright and clear as the moon,
Wind and rain arrive while pursuing worldly gain;
Where to search for that resplendent color in the mirror?
Transforming the mire and vain regret.

Beauty brings sorrow,
A dream of spring leaves no trace;
Beauty brings sorrow,
A dream of spring leaves no trace

Better to return home,
Better to ride the wind back home.

(The wildflowers in the meadow softly hum the song of the spring wind.
Candraprabha walks onto the stage and strolls amongst the gently swaying
flowers.)

Candraprabha: Wow! What a pure and fresh mountain valley! And such a
marvelous song! Who is that singing?

(looks around) Huh? Who is that singing? Sarvajna! Sarvajna!

(singing stops) Master Sarvajna, is that you? Hello—Is anyone there?

(No reply. Candraprabha looks all over, but finds no one. Disappointed and
weary, he sits on a rock next to an old pine tree and falls asleep. Just then, all

the plants begin to stir.)

Sunflower: (unable to remain silent any longer) Sister Wind has brought us some new green outfits. Then she left in a hurry to do the same elsewhere; by now she must be quite far away!

Chinese Juniper: That's right! The weather is getting warmer and warmer. Look there; the summer lotus is already beginning to bloom.

Mimosa: (merrily) That's right! The grape vines are already laden with strings of purple and greed pearls!

Old Pine: I'm accustomed to the cold, but can't stand the heat! Unlike the Sunflower, who thrives on it!

(Praised, the Sunflower smiles. Off to one side, unable to resist tidying up the pink flowers, the Mimosa bashfully raises its head.)

Mimosa: Not necessarily! The heat nearly makes me faint. Fortunately, Sister Forget-me-not lets me hide in the corner of her robe. Otherwise I'd be finished.

(The Sunflower lowers its head and takes a close look at the Mimosa)

Sunflower: (surprised) Indeed! Sister Mimosa's green feathery skirt is about to turn yellow. Then we'll see if you don't run and hide under Uncle Juniper's arms! You see, Sister Forget-me-not can't even fend for herself!

Forget-me-not: Alas! I sure do miss Auntie Rain and Uncle Cloud!

Plants: (in unison) We do too!



(As the plants continue conversing, Candrababha slowly awakes and hears the voices both near and far; curiously listening, he is surprised to discover that the voices belong to the plants.)

Candrababha: (pleasantly surprised) Wow—Pine, Chinese Juniper, Sunflower, Forget-me-not; how is it you can talk?

Forget-me-not: (drawing a breath) Hey! The man sleeping next to Grandpa Pine is awake.

(Hastening to retract their leaves, the Sunflower and the Forget-me-not take on an anxious look.)

Candrababha: (politely) May I ask, were all of you talking just now?

(Old Pine clears his throat and calmly replies.)

Old Pine: Everything under the sun can talk; it's just that most humans don't hear it!

Candrababha: Why not?

Old Pine: Because their minds are full of extraneous thoughts and misconceptions. But you seem to be an exception!

Candrababha: (delighted) Wow!

Old Pine: (calm and composed) Hearing your polite and gentle manner of speaking, I can see that you have a clear and innocent mind; that's why you can hear us speaking.

(The Sunflower and the other flowers gradually lose their apprehension; the Mimosa slowly extends its leaves.)

Sunflower: (pouting) That's right! Most people just want to pick our pretty blossoms and then toss us by the side of the road; or else they forget to water us until we start to wither

Forget-me-not: (interjecting) And we thought that they were going to take us home and take good care of us!

Mimosa: That's right! They have no respect for others, and they're always stepping on us!

Candrababha: (shamefully) So it is. I'm sorry about that. We humans really ought to have more respect for the natural world.

Old Pine: (sighing) If all humans thought like you do, then the planet would be in much better shape.

Juniper: Right! But how did you find your way to this remote mountain valley?

Candrababha: I was with a group of people led by Master Sarvajna searching for a legendary treasure trove. We've already spent many years searching everywhere imaginable—

Last night, after much difficulty, we finally managed to make it across a deep gorge. But in the morning the fog was so thick that I lost my way and got separated from the others. Then I accidentally stumbled upon this place. (hopefully) Have you seen my companions?

(Plants all shake their heads.)

Old Pine: This mountain valley is so remote that very few people have ever



come here.

Candraprabha: (turning anxiously) Well then, what can be done? Looking around, all I can see are mountains, forests, and ravines. How will I be able to find them?

Juniper: (reassuringly) Don't worry! We'll ask Auntie Wind; she's been everywhere. Perhaps she has seen your companions.

Candraprabha: (cheerfully) Great! Where can we find this Auntie Wind?

Sunflower: Early each morning, she comes here to dance and sing! Perhaps she's gone off somewhere on another pleasure trip.

Candraprabha: Huh? That wonderful sound we just heard was Auntie Wind singing? (takes a few steps) Has she gone sightseeing somewhere? When will she be back?

Old Pine: Don't be in a rush. She'll be back soon. Most of the time she prefers to stay here, because

Mimosa: (interjecting) Because every time she leaves, she gets all soiled by the outside world

Forget-me-not: (slightly enervated) Ugh! This summer heat is lethal! I can't stand it any longer.

Sunflower: (head lowered) Right! I almost can't hold my head up.

Mimosa: (in a hoarse voice, leaves folded in) Sure is! Especially after talking so long with this young man.

Forget-me-not: (weakly) It's been such a long time since Auntie Rain and Uncle Cloud came by to check up on us and boost our spirits. I sure do miss them!

Old Pine: (thoughtfully) Auntie Rain and Uncle Cloud always show up just when we need them. So how is it that we haven't seen a trace of them for so long now?

(As the sun hangs in the center of the sky, the normally exuberant and boisterous high meadow suddenly falls silent. Seeing how languid and listless all the plants have become, Candraprabha resignedly returns to the rock and sits down.)

Candraprabha: (sympathetically) It seems as though all the plants are nearly parched to the point of fainting. If it doesn't rain soon, they're all going to wither and die! (quickly stands up) I'd better get some water and allay their thirst!

(Suddenly, the wind is heard and the plants begin to sway.)

Auntie Wind: (cheerful and gentle) Come! Uncle Cloud and Auntie Rain, come and see everybody!

(As the wind continues to blow, the clouds move in and the entire mountain valley is engulfed in a thick mist. Great claps of thunder shake the sky and countless drops of water come pouring down from the boundless sky, dancing like celestial maidens.

Drenched by the refreshing rainwater, all the plants spontaneously smile broadly. Some even stretch out on the ground to heighten the effect. The Old Pine, the Juniper, and the other tall trees, gratefully acknowledge Auntie Cloud's solicitude before stretching out their branches and leaves to rinse off the dust. Then they use their roots to silently and efficiently imbibe the life-giving rainwater.

Sensing the plants' excitement, Candraprabha spontaneously joins their dance of joy.)



Sunflower: (ebulliently) Grandpa Pine, now you won't be troubled by the heat anymore!

Old Pine: Heh, heh, right you are! This timely rain has swept away all my long-accumulating anxiety; it's as if I've taken out a new lease on life. I'll be sure to make good use of every drop of this ambrosial rain water. See how I store it up in my treasure chest!

(Raising up some refreshing rainwater in his cupped hands, the Mimosa looks towards the Chinese Juniper and the Old Pine.)

Mimosa: (genially) Uncle Juniper, why is it that you and Grandpa Pine need so much water? For Sister Forget-me-not and myself, just a little water is enough. Just look at how plump and smooth she is!

Juniper: (affably) Every species has its own constitution; that's why some require more water than others.

Old Pine: (solemn but genial) The Clouds and Rain are like our dear parents. They are equally generous to all of us, but how much water we actually absorb and make use of depends on we ourselves.

Forget-me-not: (sincerely) That's right! Everyone has different requirements. Yet Auntie Rain and Uncle Cloud are able to satisfy all our needs.

(Having quietly withstood the downpour while listening to the plants' conversation, Candraprabha can't help but feel amazed.)

Candraprabha: (to himself) Now that this great downpour has drenched everything, all these living beings can take in as much as they need to grow

(The sun comes out and heats up the ground, causing the excess water to turn into a gauze-like vapor which rises up into the boundless blue sky and returns to the bosom of the clouds.

The moist soil nourishes innumerable beings. As a sincere expression of their boundless gratitude, the now-verdant plants become a brilliant picture of emerald green. The wildflowers bloom into a vast display of dazzling colors, causing the fairies of the meadow to dance with joy. Seeing all this, Candraprabha bursts into a paean of delight.)

Candraprabha: (delighted) Ah! Depending on the prevailing causes and conditions, the clouds and rain come in, and then they depart, always silently attuned to the needs of the great earth, their inseparable partner!

Day and night she looks after this piece of land, where all living beings by necessity know their own character and needs.

Juniper: That's right! Heaven and earth, the rain and the clouds—they all give to others silently, unconditionally, kindly, and without bias of any sort.

Old Pine: Unfortunately, few people understand this principle of mutual generosity, how giving benefits both oneself and others.

(As Candraprabha falls deep into thought, an august song reverberates through space)

Chorus: Hearing my teaching, all beings everywhere take it in as they can, Men, gods, wheel-turning monarchs, the king of the gods—these are the tiny plants;

Sravakas, arhats, and pratyeka buddhas—these are the mid-sized plants;

Bodhisattvas striving for the attainment of buddhahood—these are the large



plants.

Ever practicing compassion, bent on buddhahood, unobstructed—these are the small trees;

Endowed with supernatural powers, incapable of backsliding, delivering innumerable beings—these are the great trees;

The Buddha teaches without bias, the rain has but one flavor, as does the Dharma; beings put it into practice according to their own capacity;

Just like in the forest, each plant, great or small, grows according to its capacity.

(The plants cheer in unison, as the blades of grass sway to the music. Candraprabha happily shuttles about while singing. As the music fades, a voice is heard calling in the distance: “Candraprabha! Candraprabha! Where are you?”)

Candraprabha: (surprised) What! That’s Sarvajna! (shouting into the distance) Sarvajna! I’m over here! Where are you?

(Candraprabha takes a few quick steps in the direction of the sound, then stops, thinks of something, and turns back and waves to the plants.)

Candraprabha: Grandpa Pine, Uncle Juniper, Sunflower, Forget-me-not, Mimosa, thanks so much for all you’ve told me. Now I must quickly go and find Sarvajna and my companions. Goodbye!

Plants: Goodbye—Have a happy journey!

—Curtain closes—



17 23

The Twentieth—The River

The inverted image in the limpid river water is as blue as the sky itself. The reflection of a wild goose flying high above appears in the river, circles a few times, and flies off

All things in the world take form naturally, just like the wild goose flying through the azure blue sky. The earth and the entire universe are a wordless scripture; trees, plants, flowers, blades of grass everything is its miraculous script and scribe.





Conversation with the River

Following the fall harvest, the fields outside the city are filled with flowering rape plants. Only the clear waters of the long river meandering through the plains refrain from taking a rest.

Following the rhythm of the seasons, the cool waters of the river thoroughly nourish the fields, accompanying the spring birth and summer growth of the dark green rice seedlings. After the rice tassels humbly bow down, the river quietly flows as before

The river began to effortlessly following its winding course long before Abo's generation was born. Along with the fertile soil, its abundant waters are the lifeline of the subsistence villages which dot its banks. The river's perennial waters accompanied Abo as he grew up.

Now 80 years of age, whenever he gets the inspiration, Abo still follows the river upstream to enjoy the wonderful scenery along its banks. In its rippling inverted images are enshrined the defining moments of his life.

Early this morning Abo carries the Foundling and passes through the willow forest laden with glittering dew. As the willow branches waver in the wind, the cool dew slides off, sprinkling Abo with its refreshing coolness. In the first rays of the morning sun they leisurely make their way upstream.

The fish playfully pursue the flowers fallen into the water from the tung oil trees along the banks. Observing the fish sauntering about, Abo recalls an event from the past

“Long ago, when I was still a boy, I loved to jump into this river and swim around with the fish. That sure was a happy time,” says Abo, as much to himself as to the Foundling.

Still reminiscing, Abo emerges from the tung oil trees. As the elevation gradually increases, the trees hugging both banks become denser, until they arrive at the source of the river—a towering primeval forest. By this time, the sun is directly overhead, shining down upon the forest canopy.

The springs and streams originating in this pristine old-growth forest are crystal clear. Bubbling up like translucent lotus flowers amongst the motley array of rocks and boulders, the pellucid streams deftly converge into a river which eventually rolls out of the mountains to become the lifeline of the vast plains surrounding the city.

“Foundling, look!” calls out Abo, sitting on a large boulder while observing the river and its fish.

It’s high noon, and the murmuring river is brimming with life-energy, as evidenced by the limpid waves of light spryly dancing on the surface of the water, so bright as to cause the eyes to squint. Yet there was a time when almost no fish were seen in these limpid waters. As Abo observes the fish sauntering about, memories come bubbling up in his mind like so much spring water.

The clear and reassuring voice of the water flowing down the mountain gradually settles his mind. Abo closes his eyes and closely enters into the captivating sound.

“This river seems to be saying something. But time and again, each time I feel like I almost understand it, some stray thoughts come up, causing my attention to splinter; then that strange intuition disappears,” Abo regretfully tells the Foundling.

“Abo, you are so very sensitive! The River really is speaking to us! It’s saying that because the rhythm of your mind is so close to the pulse of heaven and earth, you therefore can feel the life-force of the natural world.



Therefore the River is sure that you are capable of understanding the story it wants to tell you!”

“Really! Foundling, I forgot that you understand the language of the streams and rivers. How wonderful! Please don’t wait; tell me what the River is saying!” says Abo with childlike urgency.

In response to Abo’s praise, the Foundling sails over to the River and turns a somersault, whereupon innumerable golden ripples burst forth on the surface of the water.

“Abo, look. Doesn’t the gurgling River water look just like the Milky Way? In order to nourish all living things, night and day it flows down from the high mountains, cutting through the deep gorges, on its way to the plains”

In the light afternoon breeze, the Foundling leisurely relates to Abo all the secrets the River has revealed to him. The scenery on the bank goes on turning —

Here in this virgin forest, the many fish living in the broad bosom of this pellucid River pass year after year free from anxiety. But it wasn’t always this way.

One day many years ago, several toddlers wearing open-crotch trousers gamboled across the fields to the place where the River leaves the mountains and enters the plains. While their mothers beat their laundry clean, the children observed a school of fish sauntering about in the water, now and then excitedly jumping in and splashing each other.

Imitating the ingenuous kids, the curious fish darted about between them, occasionally taking a mischievous nip at their naked bodies, causing them to shriek with delight. While the trees and plants along the banks swayed in

admiration, the River quietly flowed along

Then one summer, the bare-foot children had grown into youths.

Coming out in throngs for a holiday outing, they followed the River upstream, eager to visit its cool and pristine source, gleefully cooling off in the pools along the way. On that hot summer day, seeing the youths cavorting in the water, the fish resting amongst the rocks came out to greet their old friends.

Seeing the lovely, nimble fish, the youths stopped to have a look. But when the fish gave them a playful nip as in years past, the youths boorishly responded by trying to seize the fish. Then they took up sticks and rocks and commenced to make the fish the objects of their target practice. Startled by the youth's uncouth behavior, the fish quickly took cover in between the rocks.

Thereupon, disharmony pervaded the mountain forest; yet the River continued to quietly flow along

"Ah, kids these days are so frivolous and immature!" thinks Abo. "They're so stubborn and rebellious; you can't even reason with them."

Time flowed forwards as surely as the River, and before long the feckless youths had become young adults, so busy making a living that they had no time for play or leisure.

One summer day some of these same young men came to the River with a fishing net.

Hoping to bring in all the fish, they cast the net again and again, whereupon the startled fish quickly went into hiding. Unwilling to give up so easily, the young men set about scouring the riverbed in search of the fish. But after overturning every rock they could manage, yet not finding a single fish, they resentfully packed up their net and left.



Waiting for the turbid waters to settle, and still badly shaken, the Fish cautiously poked out their heads and sadly asked:

“Hey River! Those young men who just left; aren’t they the same ones who used to come and play with us when they were boys? How could they have grown up into such dastardly fellows?”

“Little Fish! Little Fish! Raise you heads and look up at the sky!” said the quietly flowing River.

Thereupon the Fish looked up at the vast vault of heaven, and its boundless purity and majesty swept away their consternation.

All of a sudden a wild goose emerged from a bank of pure white clouds hovering high above. After circling several times in a form reminiscent of the vigorous yet precise strokes of a master calligrapher, the graceful goose vanished into the clouds.

“Little Fish! Did you see that goose up in the clouds? It seems that it left some kind of message on the azure sky!”

Hearing the words of the River, the Fish again looked up at the sky to try to make out the message left behind by the gracefully soaring goose.

The Fish understood! The joyous and graceful bearing of the goose instantly put the Fish at ease.

And the River continued to silently flow

Hearing the River’s story skillfully conveyed by the Foundling, Abo unwittingly looks up in admiration at the deep blue sky.

“This boundless sky is exactly the same as the one I observed in my youth. It’s as clear and pure as before! None of the changes etched out by the movement of time are to be seen on the river and the sky; yet their traces can be seen on my person

Abo is so deeply lost in thought that even the purl of the River has become

indistinct.

“Abo! Look! There’s a wild goose in the sky, just like the one in the River’s story!”

The Foundling’s shout brings Abo out of his reverie. Sure enough, a goose circles several times in the sky and then lithely flies off.

Observing the sky and considering the conversation between the River and the Fish, Abo wonders what kind of message might have been conveyed in the graceful, artistic turns of the goose.

Abo has often seen geese flying by in the sky, but has never really thought twice about it. Too late to make out the fleeting message of the goose, the Foundling goes back to conveying the story of the River —

In time, the young adults became full-fledged adults. Now, whenever they came to the River, they thought up ways to catch the Fish, first by building an embankment, and then by using electric shocks and explosives. Before long, all the way up to the headwaters, few Fish managed to evade their insatiable pursuers.

The River kept gurgling on night and day, as steady as ever; yet the Fish were nowhere to be found.

“How can this be? Are they not those same children?” the surviving Fish grievously asked the River. “Is it that the world has changed? How is it that those kids who used to come and play with us have grown up into such heartless adults?”

“Look up into the bright azure sky. The wild goose has brought a message,” calmly replied the River.

The Fish looked up into the bright and beautiful vault of heaven.

High up in the azure sky, using its body as a brush, the goose fluently laid



down translucent lines. Having understood the message, the Fish put away their grief and with renewed confidence dove down into the water and happily sauntered about.

In time, the tung oil trees lining the riverbank shed their leaves But the traumatized Fish had yet to recover their former vitality. Then one day an old man with hoary temples came to the riverbank.

Following the riverbank for some distance and seeing so few Fish left, the old man despaired. Thinking back on his childhood and all the fun he had playing in the water, he searched about in vain for his former watery playground embellished by the lovely reflection of the trees on the surface of the water.

In his disappointment, he recalled how he and his friends brought the Fish to the brink of extinction. Then he suddenly understood!

From that day onwards, the old man dedicated himself to protecting the remaining Fish. Despite his faltering steps, all day long he patrolled the entire length of the river, checking up on the Fish. During the spawning season he took special care to insure that the Fish were not disturbed.

The old man also went about to all the towns and villages in the area to encourage others to help preserve and protect the Fish. With years of ardent advocacy on behalf of the Fish, his efforts finally had an effect, and others gradually came to join him.

After several years, the Fish population began to make a comeback, and the once-forlorn River gradually became filled with schools of boisterously sauntering Fish, just as the old man remembered it. Afterwards, the old man frequently brought his grandchildren to the river to enjoy the water and play with the Fish. He also took the opportunity to teach them about the importance of protecting the natural environment.

The children's innocent smiles and old man's kindly and gracious presence endowed the River with renewed vitality; yet the Fish were puzzled about something. Thus they quietly asked the River:

"Unbelievable! Once an innocent child, then a rash and uncouth youth, then a selfish adult, and now such a kindly old man. Yet he's the same person! How is it that one and the same person can undergo so much change?"

As seen on the mirror-like surface of the limpid water, a graceful figure silently flew through the azure sky, circled several times, and then silently flew away.

When the image of the wild goose disappeared from the surface of the water, the River again reminded the Fish:

"Carefully contemplate the message brought by the goose in the azure sky!" As before, the Fish in the River pursued the fallen flowers and sauntered about. For the murmuring sound of the River contains a story of eternal purity

Hearing this story conveyed by the Foundling, Abo spontaneously dips a hand in the river and gently stirs the water, careful not to disturb its peace. Thereupon, several Fish curiously nip at his fingers, playfully swim into his palm, and then deftly slip between his fingers.

As Abo pensively toys with the Fish, a clear and mild voice rings in his ears: "Rivers are good at guiding, fish are good at forgetting, and people are good at changing. That's why, in spite of innumerable tribulations, the Fish don't hold a grudge, but rather continue to saunter about at ease!"

The cool water of the River flows as gently as the sound of music.

"Humans are always changing. Their moods fluctuate with great rapidity; one moment they are happy, the next moment they are dejected. Just look at



their relationship with the Fish. At first they saw the Fish as playmates, but before long they were heartlessly trying to catch them with a net. Then later on they had a change of heart and they began to protect the Fish. This fickle nature of humans also makes their interpersonal relationships very complex. That's why the River and the Fish understood the message of the goose, but the people didn't!"

Captivated by the explanation, Abo catches sight of a dashing figure not far away. In the dim light of dusk, a wild goose flits by. Deeply moved by its graceful movements, he earnestly asks, "Oh River! Oh Fish! Can you please tell me the meaning of the message brought by the goose.

As the water brilliantly reflects the rays of the setting sun, a small fish leaps through the surface of the water and gracefully turns out a bright silvery arc. Amazingly, the little fish leaps out again and again, as if imitating the movements of the goose flying in the sky!

The Foundling happily explains, "Abo, the little Fish says that all the movements of the goose circling around in the azure sky are a cipher!"

"A cipher?" Abo wonders out loud.

"Right! The message brought by the goose is a cipher — the universe has neither beginning nor end!"

"The little Fish also says that the highest wisdom in the universe is ensconced in the boundless natural world. For boundless nature is the repository of innumerable scriptures of great profundity, all written in an incomparably subtle cipher!"

"Just what is this cipher?" asks Abo, now thoroughly puzzled.

"Ciph-? It's purity, freedom from defilement!" relates the Foundling, only half understanding.

"Purity? Freedom from defilement?" ponders Abo out loud. As if suddenly

getting it, he excitedly asks the River, “Is it something like the constant and unchanging rhythmic sound you make as you flow along?”

The River continues to gurgle along As Abo listens closely, hoping to again hear its secret language, the Foundling further enquires of the River:

“Do you mean that this scripture full of profound wisdom is not written in any human language, and that most people can’t even see it? If so, then where is it? And how can we find it?”

In spite of so many questions coming up in succession, the Foundling maintains his crisp composure.

A leaf falls onto the placid water and creates a slight ripple.

“All things in the universe come into being through the workings of nature. The brilliant sunlight, the glittering stars, the wild goose flying overhead anything you can imagine, it’s all an offering of nature. Thus the entire universe can be seen as a wordless scripture. Its subtle message can be glimpsed in all the details of the plants, the flowers, and the trees!” says the Foundling, joyfully conveying the inconceivable secrets of the universe. “This wordless scripture is continually being encoded in the various forms found in the world, but only those who are highly sensitive and attentive can actually see and understand them! The old ox plowing in the field, the rustling sound of the wind, the old farmer sowing seeds, the frog croaking in the moonlight, the wavelets in the sea, the drops of rain hanging to the eaves, and anything else you can imagine—it’s modes of expression are innumerable!”

Like the pure and translucent dew of late fall, the River’s explanation of the esoteric language of nature brings refreshment to body and soul.

Deep in thought, Abo appears to have understood. Then spontaneously



forgetting time, space, and self, he feels himself to be soaring along with the Foundling in the boundless sky, searching for the tracks left behind by the wild goose Then he hears the steady murmuring of the River in the distance:

“Only those who have cultivated themselves over many years, retained their innocence and purity of spirit, and have both wisdom and aesthetic sensitivity are capable of opening this scripture of the universe; for only a mind imbued with purity and integrity is sufficiently sensitive to perceive a message conveyed by heaven and earth!

“You see, this scion of the Milky Way coursing through the lovely Saha world — that’s the River. From time immemorial, it has been glistening in the high mountains, the deep valleys, and the broad plains. Night and day, it continually transmits the eternal and pure sound of the universe. Ever so quietly, it nurtures, irrigates, and guides, spontaneously and without artifice, bringing inexhaustible benefits to all living beings.”

Abo’s thoughts flow on, just like rushing water:

“The Fish, children, youths, young adults, adults, the old man—they all got what they needed from the River. For its part, the River silently gives, ardently providing its wordless guidance. So fish are good at forgetting, and people are good at changing!

“If people could only understand the message brought by the goose, even though they may not attain wisdom on par with that of the River, at least they would learn to forget good and bad, like the fish; and to be less attached and fickle!”

Abo’s train of thought rolls on, passing through his childhood and youth, memories like so many droplets of time, trickling into the present, continually and orderly. Suddenly he hears the River kindly say to the Fish:

“Oh Fish! An eternal message is ensconced in the murmuring sound of my flowing water. Listen closely to this subtle music performed for the edification of all things under the sun. Whatever form I take—a mountain stream, a waterfall, a river, an ocean wave, or a drop of rain or dew—every single drop transmits the secret sound of the universe, revealing a marvelous inexhaustible treasure!”

As the magnificent and moving secret of the universe bubbles up from the jingle-jangle of the River, it sets in motion a lovely ripple in Abo’s heart.

“Only those with utter purity of spirit, those capable of hearing the subtle sound of heaven and earth, are able to open the exquisitely jeweled door of life.”

The bright and clear voice of the River, just like the sound of glass marbles rubbing together in a child’s hand, fills every corner of the forest at twilight. Abo quietly ponders.

“By using the true mind to experience the benevolent and liberating pulse of life, you will discover that this marvelous sound is always flowing forth. Then the day will come when you will clearly see the true and original appearance of life. At that time, a whole new world overflowing with beauty will manifest before your very eyes!”

On the placid surface of the River covered with freshly fallen dandelion fluff there suddenly appears the reflection of the Foundling leisurely coursing through the clear sky.

As before, the song-like River flows east past the rocky crags

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By the time Abo comes out of the reverie induced by the music-like sound of the River, the golden-red chariot of the sun is already nearing the western mountains. The bright and dazzling rays of the setting sun throwing down a glowing web of shadow and light on the River give the forested hills an other-worldly look.

The soft, undulating light calls forth the lovely story of the fourth episode to be performed by the White Lotus Theatrical Troop. On the road leading towards the city, the Foundling hastily pulls Abo along.

Back in the city, garrulous groups of threes and fives rush off to the square. Taking the same seat, Abo recalls the stories of the past few nights, and together with the Foundling happily anticipates the next episode

“Dear friends! As day turns to night and the rosy clouds of dusk disappear behind the horizon, the wonderful search of the Treasure Seekers is about to commence!

“Tonight, led by Sarvajna, the Treasure Seekers continue their starlight journey, eating the wind and sleeping in the dew, in search of the legendary treasure of life!

“In the sea of stars, amongst the ebullient praise of heaven and earth, is this all a play? A dream? Or is it real?

“Just where is this treasure they are seeking?”

As Fuhua’s resonant voice flows into the glowing night, the curtain slowly opens —

The Fourth Night—The Legend of the Treasure Trove

Act one

△ A remote corner of the mountains

(On a cold and bleak night, a group of anxious and weary children walks through a remote region in the mountains. Having lost their way after leaving their Arcadian homeland, they nervously seek the way home, walking towards a glowing spot on a distant mountain. Dead tired after having wandered for so long, seeing smoke rising from behind the mountain, they seek a place to take a rest.)

Child A: (speaking)

Smoke curling upwards from behind the mountain,

A thread of light

Breaks through the thick, dark cloud of the mind;

Ah What is that place?

Why does it give off the light of the five desires?

Child B: (singing)

Lovely attire,

A dazzling voice,

Like a tightly woven net weighed down with lead,

Capturing the weary heart,

Reversing the mood to return home.



Children: (together)

While this

Is not our pristine native place,

We might as well halt,

And rest our weary bones.

(The children make their way towards a misty summit in the distance.

Discovering a person sleeping in the faint starlight, they run past, whereupon a celestial being appears on the summit.)

Celestial Being: (singing)

Originally pure, like bodhi,

Neither arising nor passing away, so rare in the world;

Occasionally sending seed-fluff into the wind,

Neither rejecting the mud, nor sullied by it.

Wavering, wafting a fresh fragrance, reflecting the glowing sun,

Bringing a refreshing breeze into the world;

Dew forming into jade-like droplets on the verdant leaves,

Their succulent form reflected on the water.

I ask you, sir, when will hell be emptied?

When will you, sir, no longer flounder in the mire?

Bringing to fulfillment a long-cherished dream, I return,

Year after year offering incense in this painted mansion in the east.

(The prostrate person talks in his sleep and repeatedly stretches both hands

towards the sky as if trying to grasp something. Seeing this, they slowly and quietly step backwards into the darkness.

Kaboom! Kaboom! Two loud claps of thunder rouse the sleeping person. He jumps to his feet, anxiously looks around, and promptly runs off.)

Candraprabha: (shouting in alarm) Where has everyone gone? How come I was sleeping out here in the wilderness? Why did that lovely city and gorgeous palace disappear? Where did all those celestial beings disappear to?

(As the powerful thunder and lightning continue, the stage suddenly goes dark.)

Act two

The reed catkins on the mountain have passed through several years of snow, and the Treasure Seekers have a weathered look on their faces. Guided by Sarvajna, they have traversed mountain after mountain, enduring all manner of hardship as they continue their search for the legendary treasure trove —

△ Inside a river gorge

(A river surges below towering cliffs; the Treasure Seekers gingerly follow Sarvajna through a dark ravine; the daylight gradually fades to dark.)

Sarvajna: (calmly) Stay calm and collected! Join hands and tread firmly; we'll soon be through these high waters!



(While confidently watching the esteemed Sarvajna, Candraprabha repeatedly looks back to check up on his companions.)

Candraprabha: Everyone pay attention! This peak up ahead just might be holding the treasure trove! If so, all we have to do is cross this wide gorge to reach it!

Disciple A: (terrified) But this gorge is getting really cold!

Disciple B: (stepping back) How is it that we still can't see the end of the gorge? Maybe we'd better turn back.

Disciple C: (panic-stricken) He's right! I'm so cold and hungry that I can hardly walk.

(A mountain wind howls and the waters rage, bringing down a shower of boulders from above. Terror stricken, they all scream at the top of their lungs.)

Sarvajna: (calm and composed) Everyone calm down; concentrate on what you're doing! Stay as close as possible to the side of the cliff.

(As the rumbling torrents rush past, they continue to struggle forward. The stage darkens.)

(On one side of the dark gorge, Sarvajna and the Treasure Seekers gather around a blazing fire. Having barely made it through alive, the Treasure Seekers are weary and frightened. Candraprabha looks into the darkness and ponders.)

Candraprabha: (singing)

A vast dark mist,

Dim night of dreariness,

Following our lonesome forms.

Arriving at the dark side of the mountain,

Seeing not the lonely, distant stars,

Hearing no footsteps in the vacuous gorge;

The evening breeze rustles my lapel,

Yet unable to dispel the dark clouds from my heart.

Disciple A: That sure was a close call! Such huge boulders rolling down all over! And this dark and cold gorge with towering walls like ferocious monsters. After so long, the end is nowhere in sight. How depressing!

Disciple B: (resentfully) You're telling me! Then there's that fierce wind, blowing so hard you almost can't breathe!

Disciple C: Thinking back on all of it makes my hair stand on end!

Candraprabha: Fortunately, Sarvajna got us through safely by calming us down at just the right time and telling us to mindfully link hands and stay close to the cliff.

Disciple D: (inspecting his hands and feet) We made it through that part, but not without a few scrapes and bruises.

All Disciples: (in a ruckus) Me too! Me too!

(The ruckus slowly subsides. Then one person slowly stands up.)

Disciple A: (fearfully) In search of the legendary treasure trove, we've left everything behind, crossed innumerable mountains, and endured untold



hardship; but up to now we haven't found anything. (turning towards the others) Just look at our weathered faces!

Disciple D: (fearfully) Let's turn back while we still have a chance!

Disciple B: (disheartened) He's right! Master Sarvajna, in all these years of searching we haven't seen even the slightest trace of the treasure trove

We'd better turn back!

All Disciples: (ruckus) Let's turn back! Let's turn back!

(Candrababha nervously looks at everybody and then turns to Sarvajna. Sarvajna calmly waves his hand to signal everyone to quiet down.)

Sarvajna: Calm down everyone. Listen to what I have to say. Look! (points ahead) This peak up ahead just may be where the treasure trove is located. We've already made it through that treacherous gorge. Don't give up so easily!

Disciple A: (dejectedly) Really? We've already been to so many remote mountains, but every time we've been disappointed. Isn't it the same this time?

All Disciples: (ruckus) Right! It's the same thing every time!

Candrababha: (nervously standing up) Don't be discouraged! What Master Sarvajna says is correct! We've already made it past the most dangerous part. So why not carry on a bit further?

Sarvajna: (appeasingly) It's already late, and everyone's exhausted. Let's rest for the night. In the morning we'll decide what to do!

(After exchanging perplexed glances, the Disciples grudgingly find places to lie down; Candrababha also goes to sleep. While everyone is fast asleep,

Sarvajna gets up and moves away from the blazing fire. Alone under the starry sky, he ponders.)

Sarvajna: (singing)

In the tranquil mountains,
The exquisite sound of a bell rings out;
That crisp sound of the bell,
Like a limpid spring,
Cleanses the ignorance from my heart.
The serene sound of the bell,
Like a gentle wind,
Blows the dark clouds from my heart.

The sound of the bell,
Come from a glorious aspiration;
The sound of the bell
Come from the garden of an ancient nation.
That sound of the bell, ever solicitous,
Calling out to floundering humanity;
That sound of the bell, still ringing out,
Showing the way to the bodhi path.

(Sarvajna looks up at the sky and ponders for a moment.)

Sarvajna: (to himself) We've been through countless difficulties; we've tasted every sort of bitterness. Having barely survived this latest trial, these children have become discouraged and have given up all hope of ever



finding the treasure trove. We have almost reached our destination, yet they want to turn back. But if we turn back now, all our previous efforts will have been in vain!

(Just then, a howling wind rushes down the mountain, as frightful as the cries of the Disciples in the face of death, stirring up pity in Sarvajna's heart.)

Sarvajna: Seeing how things stand, it's time to employ some skillful means to reestablish their faith.

(Turns around, returns to the fire, and goes to sleep. The fire slowly burns out.

Early the next morning, just as the sky begins to brighten, Candraprabha wakes up and sees Sarvajna standing alone in the mist looking towards the distant peak.)

Sarvajna: (smiling) The long night is over! The genial sunlight is again slowly appearing on the opposite peak, getting ready to illuminate the great earth.

Candraprabha: (surprised) Wow! There's a walled city up ahead! (the others start to wake up) Everyone, look! Over there on the opposite mountain!

Sarvajna: Everyone, take heart! Up ahead is a lovely walled city. We can go there and rest for a few days. Afterwards, if you still want to turn back and give up searching for the treasure trove, then it won't be too late!

(Looking ahead, they see a magnificent walled city on top of the mountain

swirling with clouds and mist. Their hope rekindled, they follow Sarvajna along a gallery road leading towards the city. As the mist gradually disappears, despite their apprehension, they ascend high into the clouds. Suddenly a musical sound comes down from the summit, at times distinct, at times faint, just like the call of the kalavinka bird. Then the sun finally breaks through the mist, and the view instantly clears.)

Disciple A: (beaming with joy) Such refreshing air!

Disciple B: (excitedly) I've never smelled such a lovely fragrance!

Disciple C: What exquisite music! Come and see! Over here there are tons of rare flowers!

Disciple D: Such a wonderful mountain path; truly extraordinary!

Candraprabha: Look, up ahead there is a multi-colored light!

Disciples: (together in amazement) Wow —

Sarvajna: It's a splendid palace!

Candraprabha: Let's go and take a look!

(Sarvajna leads the Treasure Seekers to a glittering palace set amidst a sea of beautiful flowers. Their spirits revived, they run towards it. Stage darkens.)

△ The splendid palace

(As the Disciples enter the palace, their hearts are suddenly filled with an indescribable joy. Their ragged and dirty clothes turn into new ones, and their cuts and bruises instantly heal.

Flowers flutter in all directions, wiping the dust from their bodies and the



weathered look from their faces. As they walk along a road strewn with fresh flowers, now and then they catch sight of many august-looking celestial beings radiating golden light, some walking, some sitting cross-legged, and others scooping up bunches of air-borne flowers with their garments and then slowly flying away.

Most amazing of all are the lotus ponds lined with the seven types of gems and filled with lovely lotus flowers of various colors.)

Candraprabha: Look! The lotus flowers are emitting a subtle glittering light which appears to be some kind of pure and eternal life-energy.

Disciple A: What a magnificent towering city. It's huge, and as bright as a polished mirror.

Disciple B: Wow! All these buildings and pools are made out of the seven kinds of gems!

Disciple C: (astonished) Have we arrived at some kind of paradise?

Disciples: (gleefully) Wonderful! This surely must be the legendary treasure trove!

(Sarvajna leads the Disciples to a pavilion on a pond, where they happily amuse themselves. Amidst a sea of glittering lights, the garden is planted with trees made of the seven types of gems—amber, lapis lazuli, crystal, etc. As the Treasure Seekers look on in astonishment, every time the wind blows, the gem trees produce an exquisite musical jingle and their flowers drop off and dance in midair.)

Sarvajna: (with a half-smile) In this place, you can instantly get whatever you want by simply thinking about it. We'll rest here for a few days. But

while you're here, be sure to remember one thing: Live completely in the present, with no thoughts of the past or future!

(A shower of flowers rains down. As the music slowly fades, day turns to night, until the stage is dark.)

△ Back in the gorge

(As thunder continually booms and lightning intermittently flashes in the dark sky, a beam of light illuminates Candraprabha sleeping alone in the wilderness. Startled awake, he jumps to his feet, looks around, and runs off in search of the others.)

Candraprabha: Where has everybody gone? Why was I sleeping alone out in the wilderness? How is it that that lovely city and beautiful palace have disappeared? And where have those golden-hued celestial beings gone?

(The stage gradually brightens, one by one revealing the Treasure Seekers nervously looking around.)

Disciples: (startled and calling out)

The gem-pools, the gem-trees, all those pavilions and flowering trees—
Where are they?

How is it that there is not a trace of last night's grand banquet?

And what about those celestial beings flying about? Where are they?

What about the jeweled pavilions and the lovely music?



(Sarvajna appears in all his majesty. Candraprabha and the disconcerted Treasure Seekers all rush up to him.)

Candraprabha: (surprised) Master Sarvajna, what's happened? Why have all those wonderful things disappeared without a trace?

Sarvajna: (genially) Take it easy. There's no need to be upset. All those things were merely an illusion. (Candraprabha appears to have a sudden insight) That walled city and everything in it were merely an illusion conjured up so as to give you a break and revive your faith. Now that you are all rested up and full of energy after halting for a few days, it's time to move on. There's no use in hankering after that dream-like banquet and all the rest. The real city of jewels is just up ahead. That's where we'll find the treasure trove we've been searching for all along, as well as the land of ultimate bliss everyone has as their final goal.

(Hearing Sarvajna's mild rebuke, everyone suddenly sees the light and feels ashamed for having been ready to give up.)

Candraprabha: (piously) Wow! Master Sarvajna, we failed the test. We were ready to give up even though we were almost there. How shameful!

(Smiling, Sarvajna slowly walks to the center of the stage, looks up to the sky, and sings a paean of joy.)

Sarvajna: (singing towards the sky)

So many practices, like so many sky-flowers,

Erecting temples, like the moon reflected in the water;

Such a lofty world, yet empty by nature,
Vowing to cut off the undefiled defilements,
To conquer Mara's army, like an image in a mirror,
To perform the great deeds of a buddha, like in a dream.
(in chorus with all the Treasure Seekers)
Residing in the dream, it goes on forever,
Awakening takes but a moment;
Fast asleep, a fleeting dream,
Completing an epic journey.

(The first rays of the rising sun appear, as if to celebrate the renewal of the Treasure Seekers. The call of the kalavinka bird comes down from a peak off in the distance. As the song continues, the sun slowly rises.)

— Curtain closes —

17 23

The Twenty-first—Flaming Clouds

When the universe was beginning to take form, first there was earth, and then there were trees; everything else came afterwards. The seeds of the trees broke through the soil, just like the penetrating light of wisdom.

But the natural order of the universe was corrupted by human artifice, and could only be reinstated by making use of the tree vines to reinstate the orderly cycle of the seasons and the principle of renewal of heaven and earth





Grandma Incense

On most days, the first thing Abo does after waking up is to light some incense, sit down, and quietly contemplate as the fragrant smoke coils upwards. On some days he adds to this a leisurely cup of tea.

As Abo contemplates the graceful appearance of the fragrant clouds, he falls into a deep reverie, his countenance becomes especially composed and serene, and a subtle half-smile appears on his face, as if he is relishing something quite wonderful!

The Foundling is also fond of the ethereal incense clouds which fill the room with their fragrant aroma.

“Foundling! Every time I burn some incense, I feel entirely composed and serene, as if my entire spirit is somehow being uplifted!” Abo once told the Foundling.

Abo also told the Foundling that all the incense he burns is given to him by an old woman who makes it.

She’s known as “Grandma Incense,” and lives in a cottage in the pine forest. In that pine forest incense is burned throughout the year, and the fragrant clouds of sandalwood, agarwood, etc., mingle with the natural aroma of the ancient pines to produce a wonderful scent which subtly puts people in a cheerful mood.

Grandma Incense is something of an eccentric. She lives alone, deep in the forest to the south of the city, and spends the entire year producing incense. When Abo was still a boy, her incense was already highly acclaimed far and wide. Despite her age—no one knows for sure how old she really is—she is vigorous and spry.

Although she lives in solitude throughout the year, Grandma Incense is cheerful and friendly. Thus the Pine Forest is often adorned with the laughter of the children who frequently go out in throngs to play in her fragrant realm. In fact, since childhood Abo has also been a regular visitor to the Pine Forest.

Ever since hearing about the fascinating Grandma Incense, the Foundling has been eager to meet her in the flesh. Today, while lighting some incense, Abo suddenly remembers that it's been a long time since he's called upon Grandma Incense. Thereupon, full of anticipation, he takes up the Foundling and makes his way towards the Pine Forest to the south out of the city.

The Pine Forest is filled with a propitious scent. Filtered by the lush pine needles, the first rays of the morning sun cast a glittering patchwork of shadow and light throughout the forest.

"Wow! This place is like a fairyland!" shouts the Foundling as soon as they enter the forest.

Although just on the outskirts of the bustling city, the pristine Pine Forest is a world apart. As soon as one enters by the narrow footpath, the delicate scent of the pine trees and the faint aroma of incense seem to wash away the dust of the world, leaving one thoroughly refreshed in body and mind.

"Hey! It seems like a fairy is going to emerge from the mysterious mist at any moment!" whispers the Foundling in an impish tone while riding on Abo's shoulder.

"As a boy, I frequently had the same impression!" confirms Abo.

Following the scent of the incense, before they know it, Abo and the Foundling arrive at a small clearing deep inside the forest, where the scent is most palpable and there stands a wooden cottage.



On either side of the door is a couplet written in faded red letters—

From the precious tree come all the fragrances in the world,
Igniting the charcoal, it turns completely red.

Abo knocks of the door and hollers:

“Grandma Incense! Grandma Incense!”

“Oh! This must be where Grandma Incense lives. Just what sort of person is she?” curiously whispers the Foundling as Abo continues to knock.

Receiving no reply, Abo fruitlessly shouts a few more times, whereupon—
creak—a strong gust of wind blows the door open.

In the middle of the room, well-lit by ambient light, stands a rustic wooden table and several chairs. On the wall hangs a huge wide-brimmed rain hat, and hanging in the corner near the door are several bunches of green bananas. Bright and clean all around, the tidy cottage exudes a comfortable ambiance. Walking inside, they see on the glossy and smooth surface of the table several long wooden cases, each with a label—sandalwood, agarwood, tulips, dipterocarp, etc. Each case is filled with various forms of incense—powder, coils, sticks, and cones. Abo can’t refrain from excitedly explaining:

“Foundling, look! These are the various types of incense meticulously made by Grandma Incense from the various ingredients she collects from all over—tree resins, flower essences, and wood chips. Even unlit, their mere presence fills the room with a delicate aroma. Their pure and natural fragrance makes you feel like you are in the middle of a primeval forest.

Every time he speaks about Grandma Incense, Abo unintentionally adopts the tone of an adoring young child praising his parents.

“Abo—Didn’t you once say that one should never enter someone else’s

house without permission?” innocently asks the Foundling.

“Indeed I did! But I was speaking in general; Grandma Incense is an exception! She never locks her door, and everyone is welcome to visit her warm and fragrant cottage. Just look at all this top-grade incense laid out all over, even though anyone can walk in at any time. The funny thing is that nothing has ever disappeared!” explains Abo as he moves about inside the cottage.

“Perhaps everyone who comes here unwittingly displays their best behavior,” plausibly comments the Foundling.

Abo smilingly walks over to the walnut-wood table next to the window and smoothly sits down. On the table is a wooden censer emitting a delicate stream of smoke which gladdens the heart and refreshes the mind.

“Ah—This is sandalwood,” says the wide-eyed Abo, admiring the aroma. Seeing the pleased expression on Abo’s face, now encircled by light streams of incense, the Foundling softly whispers:

“How remarkable! Just a small piece of incense has such a wonderful effect.”

“It sure does,” adds a slightly sighing voice.

Searching around for the source of the voice, the Foundling notices a long wooden case filled with slender incense sticks made from fine powder.

“Let me tell you! Incense has many more wonderful effects than you can imagine!” again answers the Agarwood Incense made from waterlogged wood.

“What? Even more wonderful effects?” asks the Foundling, doubtfully fluttering his sleeves.

“Otherwise, why would Grandma spend so much time and energy making it?”



“I’ll make a simple example. Early each morning, just after getting up, Grandma lights three sticks of incense, prays to heaven, and then places them inside a large pot.”

“A large pot?” the Foundling wonders out loud.

“What do you think is in the pot?” asks the Agarwood, then pausing for a moment. “Bananas!”

“Bananas?” says the surprised Foundling, then turning to look at the strings of green bananas hanging in the corner.

“That’s right, bananas! Apart from her incense, Grandma is also famous for the sweet and delicious bananas she grows. Do you know why?” asks the Agarwood, creating a sense of suspense.

Realizing all the expertise that goes into producing this incense, the Foundling carefully considers before asking:

“Could it have something to do with the incense?”

“It sure does! Grandma puts the green bananas inside this big jar and then places lit incense inside the jar every day. By the time the bananas are ripe, they are marvelously sweet and fragrant.”

“How interesting!” exclaims the fascinated Foundling. Thinking for a moment, he curiously asks, “But just how does fumigation with incense make the bananas more fragrant and sweet?”

“This is the ancient wisdom of our ancestors!” praises the Agarwood while leaving the Foundling’s question unanswered. “Do you know the proper technique for lighting incense?”

“I’ve heard Abo say that you shouldn’t let the incense flame up, so as not to waste it,” recalls the Foundling.

“Um, not bad!” says the Agarwood approvingly. “Without flaming up and burning completely, the incense is slowly burned by a small ember on its tip,

thereby producing a wonderful element called ‘living smoke.’ This is what gives incense smoke its wonderful effect; it fumigates things and causes them to ripen more quickly. This is why Grandma places incense into the jar; it not only ripens the bananas, but also gives them an especially fragrant and delicious flavor!

“So when lighting incense you need to be in a tranquil state of mind, so that the incense doesn’t flame up,” says the Agarwood, with an air of authority and in a genial tone which puts the Foundling at ease.

“Who would have thought that there is so much to know about incense!” says the astonished Foundling. After the Foundling conveys to Abo all that he has heard, Abo ponders for a moment and says:

“Right! Grandma Incense once told me that when you light incense you should do so neither very quickly nor very slowly. She also said that you should adopt a reverent attitude, because incense functions as a kind of bridge or channel by which humans communicate with heaven.”

Pausing to smile at the Foundling, Abo continues:

“Come to think of it, lighting incense without it flaming up is rather tricky. I remember how, soon after Grandma Incense taught me this, it took me quite a few tries before I could actually do it. But after several decades of practice, I’ve finally got the hang of it.”

“And that’s not all!” calls out another soft voice.

As it turns out, the sandalwood producing the delicate smoke wafting up from the wooden censor on the table also has something to say:

“No doubt, the techniques used to manufacture and ignite incense have their importance, but we mustn’t overlook the subtle yet powerful influence the scent of incense has on people! It creates an ambiance of purity and tranquility. What’s more, the purifying scent of incense dispels all sorts of



negative emotions, as if it were conquering malicious demons!”

“Wow! That’s really something!” the Foundling blurts out.

The top-grade Sandalwood continues:

“In addition to the maturing influence it has on material objects and one’s surroundings, the scent of incense exerts a subtle influence on the heart and mind, promoting a gentle and yielding demeanor. This is why when people enter the Pine Forest, especially Grandma’s cottage, they always feel clear, bright, and cheerful!”

“Now I know why people are so keen on visiting Grandma Incense and her cottage here in the Pine Forest!” the Foundling joyfully shouts out, as if he had just discovered the New World.

“No wonder city people are so fond of burning incense!”

“While pretty much everyone burns incense when they pray, it seems that perhaps Grandma Incense is the only one who truly understands the significance and wonderful effects of burning incense!”

“Hey! Hey! Who is that talking?”

Before Abo can finish his sentence, a cheery and friendly voice is heard outside. Looking in the direction of the sound, the Foundling sees an old woman with a full head of silvery-gray hair gracefully opening the wooden door.

“It’s Grandma Incense!” shouts Abo, yet to turn around, instantly recognizing that familiar voice.

Nimble and spry; tidy yet simply dressed—this is the impression people get when they first meet Grandma Incense.

The Foundling instantly feels a sense of affinity with this peculiar old lady.

With a bamboo basket resting obliquely on one shoulder, Grandma Incense briskly steps inside.

“So it’s you, young fellow!” As soon as she enters and sees Abo, an amiable expression appears on Grandma Incense’s face.

“Grandma Incense! Sorry to barge in like this,” says Abo, having already stepped forward. Despite his 80 years, in the presence of Grandma Incense, Abo unwittingly takes on the air of an innocent yet rambunctious child. After helping Grandma Incense put down her basket, Abo curiously looks at her and says:

“Where did you go this morning to collect materials? It looks like you found quite a lot!”

“That I did, that I did! At the break of day, the skylark led me deep into the forest below Big North Mountain, where there’s a whole lot of great stuff!” replies Grandma Incense, her long silvery hair setting off her genial face. Brimming with extraordinary vigor, her perspicacious eyes have a way of putting people at ease. Then she asks with her characteristic friendliness: “When did you get here?”

“Right early in the morning, when the sandalwood in the wooden censer was only half-burned!”

“Heh, heh! Young fellow, those eyes of yours are as sharp as ever; in fact, they seem to get sharper with age!” Grandma Incense says with a squint. “Today I set out especially early. For who can ignore the lovely song of the skylark? Especially when he’s so keen on leading you to find such treasures!”

Grandma Incense pulls a small incense coil out of a wooden box and lights it.

The Foundling notices the gentle grace of her movements, and that she really does ignite the incense without causing it to flame up. Despite having



just returned from collecting materials far up in the mountains, Grandma Incense is as spry and energetic as a little bird. As soon as she comes inside, she begins to busily sort and put away the materials she's brought back with her, all the while continuing to happily chat with Abo. The way she lights incense has a way of putting people at ease.

After placing the incense coil inside a bronze censer on the table and inviting Abo to sit down, she says:

"Have a whiff! This incense is freshly made."

"Wow!" quietly replies Abo. Then he and Grandma Incense quietly savor the aroma.

As the sunlight enters through the spotless windows, the stream of smoke is subtly set off against the wall. Leisurely admiring the sweet fragrance, the room takes on a serene and genial aura Observing Abo's face and half-closed eyes, the Foundling notices that all those wrinkles etched out by the chisel of time seem to instantly smooth over.

"Such a pure and peaceful world!" the Foundling spontaneously declares.

After quite a while, with the serene and cheery countenance of someone who has just woken up from some wonderful dream, Abo says:

"The lingering scent of this incense sure is pure and mellow."

"Ah, so glad you came to visit, just in time to help me test out this new incense I've developed," responds the smiling Grandma Incense, repeatedly nodding in agreement.

"Oh! It's a new type of incense, and this is the first time to try it out! What a day! In addition to smelling this fine incense, I've also learned all about the wonderful effects incense has on the body and mind. As I see it, the remarkable vigor of Grandma Incense must come from the incense she

burns,” remarks the Foundling, perching on Abo’s shoulder and observing Grandma Incense.

“You’ve got that right! Grandma Incense is a bundle of energy. She leaves others in the dust!” affirms Abo with several nods.

After unwittingly exchanging a few murmured words with the Foundling, Abo looks up and sees that Grandma Incense is smilingly watching him, whereupon he suddenly remembers that he has not yet introduced his sidekick, the Foundling. Straightaway, with the excitement of a child who has come upon some priceless gem, Abo cheerfully recounts all the fortuitous events of the past few days.

“Oh? How remarkable!” responds the fascinated Grandma Incense, turning to the Foundling and giving him the once over.

Happily encircled by the delicate stream of incense smoke, the Foundling excitedly asks Grandma Incense:

“This incense—What gives it such a marvelous effect?”

“What a bright kite you are!” says Grandma Incense with a spontaneous cackle. “You see, just like people, each type of incense has its own character. No doubt, incense adds a lot of spice to life”

“Oh, I get it!” says the Foundling, excitedly shaking his snow-white ribbon. “Incense has a subtle edifying and maturing effect!”

“Foundling, look closely!” Grandma Incense says in a tone of commendation. “See how the smoke continually rises up without any break in between? That’s the energy of motion! And when your inner spirit is endowed with that same energy of motion, then you become full of energy and vitality.”

Thinking it over for a moment, with a glimmer of insight in his eyes, the Foundling asks:



“Grandma Incense, you’re so full of vim and vigor! Does it come from this inner spiritual energy you’re talking about?”

“Foundling, low spirits and lack of energy is an internal condition, not an external one. A listless and lazy person often falls ill! But when your inner spirit has stored up a sufficient amount of energy, then you are full of youthful vitality and stamina, and you also have a lot of enthusiasm for all aspects of life. This inner vitality is also what makes the body strong and healthy!”

“So, lighting incense stirs up your inner energy. And when your energy is positive and plentiful, then your body is healthy!” says the Foundling, as if finishing Grandma Incense’s sentence.

“That’s right! Life is so very amazing! The mind controls everything. So let your spirit be just like that continuously rising trail of incense, renewing itself without ever stopping.”

“So then, where does incense come from?” asks the Foundling, increasingly eager to learn more about the secrets of incense straight from the horse’s mouth.

“From the precious tree come all the fragrances in the world. Igniting the charcoal, it turns completely red,” replies Grandma Incense, intoning the couplet written on either side of the door.

“Grandma Incense! Such marvelous intonation!” spontaneously praise the various types of incense set out on the long table.

Having seen the couplet on the way in, and now hearing it recited by Grandma Incense and praised by the incense, the Foundling is brimming with curiosity:

“Um, what does this mean?”

“Foundling, following the creation of the world, what was the earliest life

form to come into being?”

Before the Foundling even has a chance to digest the question, a deep voice rises up from one corner of the room:

“Trees! Trees are the offspring of the sun. When the universe first came into being, first there was earth, then there were trees; everything else came afterwards. All plant life has a kind of intelligence, and with their infinite variety of forms, they provide much-needed shade to all the creatures in the world!”

Turning around, the Foundling sees that the voice is that of the Amber Incense, whose plump midsection accounts for its especially deep voice. And because of its ancient origins in a fossilized tree submerged in a swamp, all the others tacitly approve.

Then Grandma Incense continues:

“In the beginning there was primordial chaos! Then the trees broke through the surface of the ground and sprang up, bringing the light of wisdom to all the world! As all the plants grew tall under the light of the sun, they transmitted their brightness and vitality throughout the world. In this way, they not only adorned the world, but also stored up the spring of life for the benefit of all creation. Think about it! Is not the very air we humans vitally depend on produced by plants? Foundling, where do you think the natural, genuine scent of this world came from?”

“..... ? ” the Foundling is dumbfounded.

“As a kite, you soar up into the sky and fly all about. What sort of feeling do you get from all that pure, natural air?” cleverly hints Grandma Incense.

“Um, the air certainly is clear and fresh, and it has a certain light fragrance” says the Foundling, recalling the fragrant grass on the verdant slopes.

“Foundling, you put it so well! In between heaven and earth, all the pure



and fresh fragrances naturally given off by the flora are present throughout space! Sandalwood, agarwood, dipterocarp—they are all refined versions of that fragrant essence inherent in all plant life!”

“Oh—Trees and plants are the source of all fragrances. And that’s why it’s said ‘From the precious tree come all the fragrances in the world!’” declares the Foundling, visibly pleased with his discovery. “But what about the other half of that lovely couplet?”

“After the trees die and topple over, from the dead wood I collect the resin, flower essence, and wood chips, and then refine it into all sorts of incense. And when you light it, just at the flash point, it gives off a fresh and pure scent,” says the smiling Grandma Incense. “When the dead tree topples over, it is already charcoal. When you light it up, it naturally gives off that glow of life. That’s the meaning of ‘Igniting the charcoal, it turns completely red!’”

“Nature is so very intriguing! ‘The world in a grain of sand; the Tathagata in a single leaf.’” After silently listening for quite a while, Abo is so moved that he spontaneously recites a verse.

“Trees are truly marvelous. Relying on the soil, their seeds sprout; moistened by the rain, they grow tall; buffeted by the wind, they disperse their scent and seeds; burned by fire, they turn into charcoal; fallen to the ground, they nourish the soil, or even become crystals.” The more she speaks, the further Grandma Incense enters into that inconceivable world of incense. After a long silence, she continues:

“There’s a certain profound mystery contained in that line, ‘Igniting the charcoal, it turns completely red.’ After wood turns into charcoal, if it gets buried under the soil and is compressed for a long time, and if the conditions are just right, then it turns into a crystal! It starts out as a brittle piece of black charcoal, but ends up as a dazzling, diamond-hard crystal!”

Deeply moved by the words of Grandma Incense, Abo and the Foundling remain silent for a long while. Then Grandma Incense says in a leisurely tone:

“We need to understand how to ignite the kindling of wisdom which resides in our hearts. Then we need to continually keep it going while courageously persevering in all sorts of circumstances; only then will it reveal the true appearance of life, so vast and mysterious!”

Watching the trail of incense slowly rising up, following Grandma Incense’s sonorous voice, Abo and the Foundling fall into a wonderful reverie

After reluctantly departing, on the return journey the Foundling soars on high, calling out:

“Grandma Incense sure does know a lot about incense!”

“Grandma Incense often says that the only books she’s ever read are the books of nature, and that most people, instead of paying attention to what is right in front of them, habitually chase after things distant and unknown!”

“Wow! She really is something else!”

“Spending a day in the world of incense sure has been an eye opener

On and on into the distance, Abo leads the Foundling straight towards the light-green bamboo forest at the foot of the mountain in front of the setting sun.

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Having spent the entire day at the cottage of Grandma Incense, Abo leisurely leads the Foundling, now thoroughly perfumed in body and mind, through the Pine Forest and straight towards the city square.



“Look! Above the hilltop to the east,” the Foundling cheerfully calls out.

“Ah! It’s a meteor shower!” marvels Abo, thinking back on how bright the stars and moon have been over the past few nights. “How strange! Foundling, have you noticed how brilliant the moon and stars have been on each night the White Lotus Theatrical Troop has put on a performance? It’s as if they’ve come to see the show.”

Looking up at the lovely night sky, the Foundling nods and says, “So you’re also going to the show!”

“It’s said that everyone is born with a priceless gem ensconced in their birthday suit.

“Dear friends, tonight we present the fifth story in this series.

“A gem inside your clothes! The person who has neither bartered away nor forgotten this gem sewn inside his clothes—he has insight into the truly vast and lush scenery along the leisurely road of life. He will never again be lost and cast adrift.

“Friends, do you recall this gem sewn inside your clothes?

“Tonight we perform a story which bears a lot of truth for all of us.

“A solitary Vagrant suffering all manner of tribulation as he wanders far and wide suddenly discovers that all along a precious gem has been inside his lapel, whereupon the entire world takes on a totally new appearance!”

As Fuhua concludes his captivating introduction, the curtain slowly opens and his voice is gradually superseded by an august and auspicious song of praise which soon reverberates throughout the square and into the hearts of everyone in the audience

The Fifth Night—A Gem inside the Lapel

△ The foothills of the Himalayas

(On a balmy March day in the Himalayas, the dazzling white snow feeds rivulets and streams which rush through the gorges with the momentum of a silver dragon. These are the head-waters of the Ganges River.)

Vagrant: (singing)

Clear is the season the season of flowing water,
Daily flowing flowing into my youth,
Below the stone steps white flowers wavering in the wind.

Fortuitously bringing out the beauty of the season,
The poetry of the season.
Observing the cloudless sky bright with the spring sunlight,
Sunlight like water flowing past my fingertips.
Observing on the surface of the water the sun's peaceful passing,
Again leaving behind a billowing wave,
Bubbling foam.

(Touched by the joyous renewal of life in spring, the Vagrant forgets his troubles and trades his knitted brow for a slight smile.)

Vagrant: Such lovely scenery! The gleaming reflection of the distant stupa, the fragrant spring wind. Yet yet!



(The balmy breeze is unable to disperse the sadness and regret lodged deep in the Vagrant's heart. Yet he harbors a glimmer of hope as he searches for his long-lost friend.)

Vagrant: (standing on a hill overlooking a city; speaking to himself)
This friend of mine is a devout follower of the Buddha, and he lives here in Sravasti. Every spring he puts on a big almsgiving for ascetics and contemplatives from far and wide, at the same time inviting eminent monastics to give spiritual teachings. He also takes the opportunity to offer all sorts of alms to orphans, widows, and the destitute. If I attend, I might be able to find him.

△ Almsgiving ceremony at Sravasti

(When the Vagrant enters Sravasti, a major city in North India, the freshly swept streets decorated with banners are already filled with the sonorous sound of Buddhist chanting and overflowing with piously smiling crowds. Following the jeweled banners, he soon arrives at the plaza where the Dharma teachings will take place. Just then, an elder with bushy eyebrows is chanting a scripture.)

Elder: Like a poor man arrived at the home of a friend,
A home of great wealth furnished with all delectable things.
Taking a priceless gem he sews it into his lapel,
Secretly, as a gift while the man is asleep.
Then that man gets up and proceeds to another country,
Where he falls upon hard times reduced to destitution;

Happy to get a little let alone a lot,
Unaware of the gem inside his lapel.
Later he again meets his dear friend,
Who rebukes him and shows him the gem.
Seeing the gem the man is overjoyed,
For now he is wealthy able to fulfill his every desire.
We are also like this man

(The Vagrant brings his hands together in salutation, sits down cross legged, and joins the recitation. The situation reminds the Vagrant of an event from some years ago. He catches sight of his old friend, the broadly smiling Sarvajna. The surroundings slowly darken. After a moment, a light comes on in one corner of the stage, whereupon that same past event become the subject of the play.)

Sarvajna: Young friend, stay at my place tonight. The ceremony will continue for another three days. Why don't you attend and listen to the learned monks teaching on causation and karma? It's sure to be a lively and memorable event!

Vagrant: (reticently) Thanks so much, Uncle!

(This is the first the Vagrant has stayed with Sarvajna. When he arrived he was clearly listless and dejected. Yet, after listening to the Dharma talks and receiving food, clothes, and much generous hospitality from the kindly Sarvajna, the Vagrant quickly gains some much-needed hope. His hunger satisfied, his weariness catches up with him and he falls fast asleep.)



△ In the bedroom

(Checking up on the Vagrant, Sarvajna sees that he is already fast asleep on the bed, and still dressed in his soiled clothes. Not having the heart to rouse him from his sleep, Sarvajna silently considers the situation.)

Sarvajna: It's time for me to set out with my disciples, and it's hard to say when I'll return. If this young man leaves empty handed before I return, he'll probably end up destitute and homeless again. Now, if I were to place some money and new clothing on the bedstead, it might help him for a while, but what will happen when he eventually wears out the clothing and uses up the money? What would be the best way to help him?

(After much deliberation, Sarvajna finally pulls out a precious gem and sews it into the lapel of the Vagrant's shabby cloak, singing as he sews.)

Sarvajna: (singing)

Dark clouds hazy waters,
The far-roaming Vagrant peacefully dreams.

The wind cools the night deepens,
Dreaming of home, the ache in his heart deepens;
Body tossing and turning heart wavering,
As though Guanyin were by your side.

A precious gem inside your cloak,
A precious gem inside your person;

Tomorrow, after dusk falls on the streets,
The old bodhi tree sees the crow returning.

(Still singing, Sarvajna sets out with the Treasure Seekers in tow. The stage slowly darkens.)

△ The Bodhi Tree Grove at Sravasti

(As the lights slowly brighten around the plaza where the Dharma teachings are being conducted, the Vagrant returns to the present, opens his eyes, and looks around at the crowd still chanting. With a pensive look on his face, he slowly walks into the grove of bodhi trees.)

Vagrant: (singing)

The road over the mountain suspended on the horizon,
Ever-drifting clouds now crossing the pass.
What's the use in walking,
When there's nowhere to walk to anymore?
For me, there's nowhere to go.

Last night I dreamed of a copper bell,
It suddenly struck my heart;
The bright stars plummeted to the earth.
When I opened my eyes,
That mountain of the spirit was already in my heart;
Next to my ear,
The stream seems to teach the Dharma rushing on.



(The Vagrant leisurely returns to the plaza. Sarvajna and the Treasure Seekers return to the city. Seeing the wonderful sight, Candraprabha breaks into a song of joy.)

Candraprabha: (singing)

Clouds unbounded water crystalline,
 Endless mountains, roads by darkness obscured.
 Wind slows rain abates,
 A weary bird returns to its tree.
 Birdsong in the wee hours a traveler's pure voice,
 Once in search of green grass now tracing the fallen flowers.

Spring dream leaving no trace body twisted like duckweed,
 In the east a hedge of yellow chrysanthemum in the west the old garden
 outside the window.

Lotus leaves flat lotus flowers upright,
 Born of the mud flourishing in the mire.

Spring water, turbid on leaving the mountains up high running clear,
 Falling flowers, eternal spring clouds disperse, moonlight appears.

(As the song continues, everyone gathers around Sarvajna, talking excitedly as they arrive at the plaza.)

Disciple A: Master Sarvajna, look at all these lovely banners blowing in the wind!

Disciple B: What a lively scene! So many smiling people reverently listening to the Dharma and chanting.

Disciple C: Master Sarvajna! Everything is so clean, I can't wait to join in the chanting.

(Sarvajna enters the grove of bodhi trees surrounding the plaza and quietly listens to the chanting. Suddenly someone approaches him from the front of the crowd.)

Vagrant: (surprised) Wow—Uncle! Uncle!

Sarvajna: (pleasantly surprised, going forward) My boy! How is it you are here?

(Seeing them meet, the Treasure Seekers gather around.)

Candraprabha: (suddenly remembering) Oh—You are that friend of Sarvajna! I met you only briefly several years ago, at this very place, but I remember you well.

Vagrant: (emotionally) That's right! At that time I was really down on my luck, and I came from far away hoping to get some help from an old friend of the family. Seeing how wan and sallow I was, my kindly uncle took me in and encouraged me to attend the Dharma ceremony and listen to the eminent monks' teachings on conditionality and karma. I still remember how on the last evening of the event, after listening to the teachings and having a good meal, I enjoyed a truly wonderful sleep.

Sarvajna: (sighing) Early the next morning I had to set off on a long journey. I couldn't bear to wake you from your blissful slumber, so before leaving



I told the servants to take good care of you. But from what I heard, when you woke up and found out that I was gone and wouldn't be back for a long time, you quietly left. No one even knew where you went; we inquired all over, but nobody had seen you!

(Sarvajna concernedly looks over the Vagrant. Standing to one side, the Treasure Seekers sing of the Vagrant's experience roaming about for so long.)

Treasure Seekers: (chorus)

Silent secluded valley like my heart,
 Lazy shadow my only companion;
 Silence of the night,
 Wordlessly elegant;
 Listen—
 To the sound
 Of my sluggish footsteps.

Anxious evening bell ringing night after night,
 Echoing through the empty valley clear and bright;
 The cloud of doubt shading my heart disappears without a trace.

Untrammeled bearing,
 Nestled against the riverbank,
 Inwardly listening;
 Solitary shadow so graceful,
 Walking alone;

A genial breeze,
Rustling sleeve ever so lightly.

Sound of the bell in the deep and secluded valley,
Clearly ringing out, night after night;
Imploring the moon and stars
To dispel the darkness from the human heart.

(As the soft chanting continues, the Treasure Seekers slowly disappear into the darkness. A beam of light shines down from the top of the bodhi tree; Sarvajna concernedly inquires into the Vagrant's recent circumstances.)

Sarvajna: (concernedly) How is it you are still so down on your luck? What have you been up to over the past few years?

Vagrant: Uncle, ever since I left, I have always felt like there was something very familiar in my heart. (silently ponders for a few moments)

I can't put my finger on it, but I no longer felt uncouth and uncultured. For some years now, I've been drifting around, eking out a living. Although it's been difficult, every time I recall the scriptures and chanting I heard during that Dharma ceremony, it gives me a strange, incomparable sense of peace.

Sarvajna: (smiling) Ah—My boy, what sort of experience are you talking about?

Vagrant: (looking down; low voice) I used to resent being an uncultured orphan, and also the mistreatment I received from others. But I've gradually come to know that I possess something very precious. Now I see mistreatment and insults as an encouragement to hone my character and to diligently search for the source of that precious inner peace.



Sarvajna: (kindly) My boy, you've already derived much benefit from the Dharma. Yet—You still haven't discovered the precious gem I hid inside your ragged cloak while you were sleeping!

Vagrant: (puzzled) Precious gem? What precious gem?

Sarvajna: At that time, just before setting off, I came to check up on you, but you were already fast asleep. From the weathered and weary expression on your face, I gathered that you had endured many years of lonely destitution, and also that you had a rather proud and unyielding character. Considering that it might be a long time before I returned from my long trip, I realized that if you left before I got back, then you would probably end up destitute and living on the streets once again. After deliberating for a long while, feeling like I had to find a way to help, I took a precious gem and personally sewed it into the lapel of your ragged cloak.

(Hearing the story, the Treasure Seekers are astonished.)

Sarvajna: (singing)

Dark clouds hazy waters,
The far-roaming Vagrant peacefully dreams;
The wind cools the night deepens,
Dreaming of home, the ache in his heart deepens;
Body tossing and turning heart wavering,
As though Guanyin were by your side.

A precious gem inside your cloak,
A precious gem inside your person;
Tomorrow, after dusk falls on the streets,

The old bodhi tree sees the crow returning.

(With a pensive look, the Vagrant slowly begins to hum along with the song.)

Vagrant: (suddenly remembering) This song; I've heard this song before!

Sarvajna: (gratified) My boy, do you remember? At that time I sewed a priceless gem into the lapel of your old cloak, a gem that can change the course of your life—and your future lives.

(Puzzled, the Vagrant looks at Sarvajna; in the section of the stage illuminated by the background lights, the monastics and the Treasure Seekers sit cross-legged and chant—)

Monastics and Seekers: (chanting low, level, and briskly)

Wake up my canary,
Forthwith break through the dust,
Listen closely to the drum of the Dharma.
In the Flower-adornment Realm,
A wise man
Expounds the scriptures;
Awakening those covered in dust.

(As the low sound of the wooden fish echoes, the Vagrant thinks deeply. As a crescent moon rises, the background lights gradually dim, candles are lit up around the plaza, and an insightful look slowly comes to the Vagrant's face.)



Vagrant: (happily amazed) That's it, a priceless gem inside my cloak! A priceless gem inside my cloak! Now I understand! I completely understand! I understand the entire world! (exultantly and spontaneously sings)

At dusk in the sky,
I see an image of my dream;
Dusk gradual dusk,
A ray of moonlight opens my inner vision.

Instantly one flower, a single leaf,
Both smiling the trichiliocosm
Turns to me,
Vaguely smiling.

Now you know and I know,
One flower, a single leaf the trichiliocosm,
Along with illusions all are real.

(As the song ends, the lilting ring of a chime rises up; the background lights fully light up; all that can be seen is the entire cast slowly pacing in single file.)

Everybody: (chorus)
Moon in the water agitated and restless,
Frosty sky, moon sets, darkness and confusion.

Traveler in a dream gem inside his lapel,

Returning, gem transforms the dust.

No more begging no more seeking;
Come at leisure, making chitchat,
Two peach blossoms open below the stairs.

(The booming sound of a drum fills the plaza; the cast stands still. Sarvajna looks up at the sky and speaks in a bell-like voice.)

Sarvajna: The hundred rivers flowing towards the sea arriving they lose their names;
The one mind turning in accordance with circumstances turning back to its original place.

(The entire plaza darkens; all that can be seen is the crescent moon on top of the bodhi tree. The moon waxes until full, at which moment the stars appear and continue to glitter and glisten.)

— Curtain closes —

17 23

The Twenty-second—The Dance of the Wind

It's said that the dance of the wind contains all the highest forms of art that have ever existed in the universe

Whatever is created by heaven and earth is superb and exquisite; whatever exists has unbounded grace and charm. Happiness, blessings, and wisdom are completely interdependent; no matter how one may try, they can't be separated.





The Dream Chair

Just after midnight, a lone vehicle speeds through the empty streets and out towards Abo's Green Bamboo Cliff.

Startled awake by the loud clamor of the rushing vehicle, the birds and beasts scurry about. Only the bright moon hanging high in the sky, illuminating the road, remains undisturbed.

Awakened by all the clamor, Abo sits up and lights a lamp. "Knock-knock!" In response to the light knock on the door, Abo calls out:

"Who is it?"

"Dad! Dad! It's me—" comes the urgent reply.

As it turns out, Abo's son, who now lives in the big city, has returned in the middle of the night.

"I hope you have a good reason for arriving like this in the middle of the night," Abo replies in his normal tone of voice, though expecting from the circumstances that something unusual must have happened.

"Dad, if it weren't urgent, I wouldn't suddenly show up like this," apologetically replies Abo's son, unable to conceal his urgent expression. "I've been on the road all night, because I need your help. There's another craft competition, and you're the only one who can help me win it!"

"Oh—What's the problem this time?" says Abo while passing a cup of hot tea to his dear son. "First catch your breath, then take your time and tell me all about it."

After taking a drink of tea and calming down a bit, Abo's youthful son explains why he has arrived so suddenly in the middle of the night.

As it turns out, Abo is a retired master craftsman. His son followed in his father's footsteps, and when Abo retired and returned to his native place, his son took over the family business. Now Abo's son is widely regarded as a first-rate craftsman in his own right, able to quickly and skillfully produce whatever his customers want. However, a contest is currently being held, challenging the contestants to complete a certain furniture design which has confounded every craftsman in the city, including Abo's son.

"What is the challenge this time? How could it be that no one can complete it, even by working on it together?"

"The challenge is so unusual and difficult, that no one even knows how to start it, let alone complete it!"

Having garnered Abo's full attention, his son continues:

"The challenge of the contest is to create something called the 'dream chair.' The actual design of this lounge chair was lost long ago, but legend has it that its design is based on nature itself, and that it is incomparably comfortable and beautiful."

Abo smilingly replies, "This contest has been held every five years for a long time now. Surely someone must be up for the challenge!"

"One would think so! Even though all the top craftsmen in the city have been racking their brains for the sake of winning this contest, nobody really knows how to make such a peculiar chair. At this point, everyone is at their wit's end"Abo's son explains with a coy smile while scratching his head.

"I've been thinking about it day and night. In fact, one night I had a strange dream. I was walking alone in a lonely forest Under a large tree I saw what looked like a wonderful lounge chair. I only caught a glimpse of it, then I woke up. I immediately called everyone together to try to create that



chair I saw in my dream.”

“With a design to go on, you still couldn’t make it?”

Unconsciously displaying a helpless smile, the young man continues:

“Exactly the opposite, and this is the problem! Although this chair in my dream surely was flawless and incomparable, try as I may, I simply couldn’t make out its design. After months of trying out everything I could think of, I still couldn’t make it, and now I can’t even clearly recall the image of that chair I saw in my dream. Now that the day of the contest is drawing near, I’m thoroughly frustrated and stressed out. Only half a month remains; if I fail to make this chair I’ll become the laughingstock of the entire city! I’m truly at my wit’s end; that’s why I’ve rushed back to the Green Bamboo Cliff like this. It seems to me that you’re the only one who can solve this problem!”

Quietly considering his dear son’s predicament, Abo slowly walks over to the window and says:

“You’d better first take a rest!”

After his son calms down a bit and goes to sleep, Abo pensively gazes up at the distant stars. Outside, all the birds and beasts have gone back to sleep, leaving the Green Bamboo Cliff perfectly quiet but for the wind rustling the moonlit foliage and stirring up the clear and melodious sound of the bamboo chimes hanging in front of the window.

The Foundling sees what looks like a flash of insight in Abo’s eyes; then Abo softly says:

“Foundling, that lounge chair in a dream is called the “lotus lounge chair.” It’s unrivalled in the entire world. The only problem is—its design was lost long ago

“What? You know about that extraordinary chair?” says the Foundling, pleased but somewhat dubious. “But seeing that the design has been lost,

will it still be possible to make it?”

“Don’t worry; there’s still some hope” says the imperturbable Abo, flashing a knowing smile. “I have an old friend; he’s sure to know how to make it. He knows absolutely everything there is to know about carpentry and craftsmanship! We’ll go to see him in the morning But we have to leave early so that we can get back in time for tomorrow night’s show!”

In the blurry predawn light, Abo prepares to set out. Glancing at his dear son still deep asleep, he hesitates for a moment and then quietly departs with the Foundling in tow.

As the first rays of the morning sun infiltrate the dense foliage of the bamboo forest, the birds and beasts are already so immersed in foraging that they take no notice of Abo’s hurried footsteps. His energy growing as he goes along, Abo spontaneously hums a tune to accompany his vigorous pace.

“Abo, just where does this friend of yours live? Can he really make that ‘lotus lounge chair’ you heard about?” says the Foundling, giving expression to the concerns he’s been harboring all night.

“This friend of mine lives in a very deep valley. I have perfect confidence in his ability. When you meet him you’ll know what I mean,” happily replies Abo. “Foundling, today we have to follow the track of the wind.”

“Follow the track of the wind?” says the Foundling while turning a joyful somersault in midair. Then he smiling shouts, “Great! The wind is my good friend; he always brings lots of news.”

“That’s right; the wind contains all sorts of information about the natural world, but to hear it you have to listen very closely,” Abo says with deep feeling. “For only the two of us truly understand the wordless language of nature and the boundlessly wonderful pulsation of life.”



As Abo gives copious expression to his inner experience, the Foundling soars through space and eagerly replies:

“I’ll be sure to tell you everything I hear!”

Chatting as they go, Abo and the Foundling soon find themselves in an ancient pine forest deep in the mountains. The majestic towering pines have gnarled roots intertwined with twisting vines, giving visitors the impression of having been transported back to the time when the world was first taking form.

Having walked quite a while, Abo suddenly stops and quietly listens to the sougning of the wind in the pines.

“The wind here sure is unusual! Whirling round and round through the trees, it sounds so lovely, as if it’s singing an ancient melody!” the Foundling spontaneously praises.

“Whirling,” repeats Abo, looking up at the pine trees waving in the wind After observing and listening for a moment, Abo smiles excitedly before continuing to stride towards the north at an accelerated pace.

On and on they go through the endless primeval forest Just as the Foundling is wondering if they will ever reach the other side and getting ready to ask Abo if they are on the right path, the bright rays of the sun come into sight and they emerge from the old-growth pine forest. The blazing orb of the sun hangs high on the opposite peak.

“Ah! This is it!” says Abo joyfully, pointing to a suspended notch up ahead. High up in the sky, perceiving that the wind is whirling faster, the Foundling shouts:

“The wind is moving towards that notch in the distance!”

“Well then, let’s follow the wind!” says Abo in a mischievous tone while briskly striding towards the notch.

“Abo, this sure is an unusual place, rather like an ancient fairyland. How did you ever discover this place?”

“Completely by accident. As you know, I like to roam about, look around, and see if I can find some interesting material. It was about three years ago—

“One day I found myself at the foot of this mountain, where I saw some rare pieces of wood. I picked them up and started to leave, but I gradually became rather tired and decided to sit down. I then leaned against a tree and took a short nap. When I was half asleep I suddenly heard the distant sound of music, and thought I must be dreaming Actually, to this day, I still can’t say for sure whether or not it was just a dream”

As he goes on, Abo’s voice lowers, as if he were deep in recollection:

“After I woke up, the music was still vaguely ringing in my ears, and my perception was unclear. I sat down again at the same place, but then I found myself unable to move I don’t know for how long, but it seemed like a very long time, yet also no time at all! In fact, it felt to me like time had totally disappeared.”

“And then what? What about the music? Where was it coming from?” curiously asks the Foundling, somewhat bringing Abo back to the present.

“As I was quietly sitting there, I felt a light breeze; it was very gentle and comforting! Just as I was feeling completely relaxed, all of a sudden I clearly heard that same music. I immediately began to listen closely. Finally—I made out that it was coming from inside the forest, and I couldn’t resist walking in that direction And that’s how I came to this ancient pine forest. In the end, I discovered that the music was actually the sound produced by the wind blowing through the pine forest.



“Wow! The sounds of nature sure are the most marvelous music in the entire universe!” adds the Foundling.

“Following the wave-like music, I entered this forest and gathered quite a few odd-looking pieces of dry wood—all excellent craft material. To me, this place is a kind of treasure chest! Since then, I often come here to collect wood and listen to the sound of the wind blowing through the pines. Over time, I’ve become familiar with its rhythm. One time, I was so moved by this rhythm that I followed the wind even deeper into the forest When I eventually emerged from the pine forest, off in the distance I discovered that notch we saw a while ago. Sensing that there was something different about the wind that day, I continued to follow it That’s how I found this long and deep gorge!”

As Abo speaks, they enter into the narrow and twisting gorge. The towering walls of the gorge are so precipitous and close together, that from below the sky looks just like a flashing blue dragon swirling through space.

“One time, I conducted a kind of experiment. I decided to leave no markers as I made my way through the forest, so that in the future, if I couldn’t make out the rhythm of the wind blowing through the pines, then I wouldn’t be able to navigate my way through the forest and find the notch!” Abo explains.

“Wow! It’s not easy to find your way out of such a huge forest. But as it turns out, the music of the wind can act as a guide! Abo, you sure do have a highly refined sense of perception!” ascertains the Foundling by virtue of his own acute intuition.

Chatting as they go, they make their way through the long gorge and begin ascending towards the hanging notch seemingly suspended in space.

After climbing up to the notch and proceeding a few dozen steps, a fantastic sight appears before their eyes—a lush green mountain valley spreading out beneath the clear blue sky, carpeted with a tapestry of fragrant grass, with a single towering pine tree standing in the center. The thick shadow of that massive and majestic pine covers nearly the entire valley, giving it the appearance of a huge blue lotus. Even more amazing are the innumerable vines twisting around the ashen trunk and the gracefully intertwining aerial roots hanging from the broadly spreading branches, some reaching all the way to the ground!

“Wow, what a deep valley and lush meadow! This ancient tree has a shadow so broad that it covers nearly the entire valley! What a remarkable place!” spontaneously calls out the Foundling, nearly surfeited on the lovely sight. Flashing a big smile, Abo briskly strides through the notch, descends into the broad valley, and enters the dense, umbrella-like shadow of the old pine.

“Foundling, have you noticed the difference in the wind? After it passes through the long and winding gorge and enters into this wide valley, it starts to gyrate. Then it vibrates the old pine tree and the vines hanging onto it, creating a most peculiar and graceful dance-like rhythm,” says Abo, taking in a few deep breaths so as to more fully appreciate the rhythm of the wind and the old pine.

“Dance? Oh, I see! Abo, you put it so well!” says the Foundling, listening closely and admiring the way the old pine swings and sways in the wind.

“A wonderful dance indeed. The way the old pine gracefully sways with every turn of the wind; how how free and unfettered! Yes! Free and unfettered! When I heard about that indescribable lounge chair in a dream, it sounded strangely familiar. Last night, when the bamboos where rustling in the wind, I suddenly remembered my old friend the pine here



in this mountain valley. Ah, truly marvelous! Free and unfettered the free and unfettered lotus lounge chair” says Abo, as he excitedly demonstrates the movement of the old pine.

“Ah-hah! Abo, that old friend you mentioned is actually this old pine tree!” declares the Foundling.

“That’s right, Foundling, it’s this old pine! The first time I found my way through that long gorge, through that notch, and into this verdant valley, I was deeply fascinated with this old pine tree. I sensed that the pine was having a conversation with the swirling wind. I couldn’t really understand what they were talking about, but for some reason I enjoyed listening to them anyway, for the sound of the wind vibrating the branches and needles made me feel incomparably relaxed, right down to my very last pore!”

As Abo leisurely speaks, he walks through the hanging vines and towards the trunk of the old pine tree. As the aerial roots brush his face, he lightly pushes them to the side, occasionally stopping to admire them more closely. Then he says in a tone of praise:

“These vines and their aerial roots are the highest art form in the universe! Just look at the way they bend so lithely, so effortlessly. Even the most renowned work of craftsmanship pales in comparison. In fact, this place is so full of creative energy that I think of it as a treasure store of craftwork. I often come here to quietly admire this tree and enjoy the positive energy of this place. Over time, I’ve come to regard this pine tree as my old friend.”

“I see!” happily accedes the Foundling, as the whirling wind gives him a soothing caress.

“Foundling, for some reason I get the strong impression—that this old pine tree knows the design of that lounge chair in a dream If only I could understand the conversation it has with the wind!”

Leaning against the stately tree, Abo looks up at the sky and closely listens to the sound of the whirling wind. Observing the pine's dense foliage and the waving vines, Abo spontaneously thinks of the lounge chair in a dream. As he continues to ponder, he unwittingly falls into a long reverie

Suddenly, Abo feels a light tapping on the elbow he is using to support his head.

"Abo—Abo—the Old Pine is responding to your request; he's talking to you right now!" Still in a hazy state, Abo barely makes out the Foundling's excited voice.

In tune with the whirling wind, the lush foliage of the Old Pine produces a magnificent lilting melody. Hearing it, the incomparably happy Abo asks:

"Is the Old Pine speaking to me? What is he saying?"

"The Old Pine says that that dream chair is an incomparable masterpiece of nature, not something that can be created by mere human artifice."

"Does that mean that it can't be made?" asks Abo in a tone of disappointment."

"Not necessarily! The Old Pine wants you to concentrate, listen closely, and wait for the wind to come!"

"Wait for the wind to come—"

Observing the lush and silent valley, Abo senses that some great secret is about to be revealed. Waiting with bated breath, he suddenly realizes that this mountain valley is actually a stately world of its own! Looking around, he observes the lush green grass emitting a sacred and mysterious green light, as if to praise and glorify the Old Pine; the jade-like vines clinging to the cliffs glistening with energy; and the rapid sweeping motion of the sinuous vines hanging from the tree

All this is so natural and pure that it seems to be intentionally yet



spontaneously revealing some kind of secret. While vaguely perceiving this dance of energy, Abo senses that he still can't fully make out its deeper meaning, causing him to gradually become anxious Just when the inner torment is almost too much for him to take any longer, Abo leans against the trunk and takes a few deep breaths, but can't fully dispel his fatigue

"Abo, it's the wind!" the Foundling calls out to Abo, still half conscious.

"Huh?" says Abo, cracking open his eyelids.

It really is the wind! A light breeze gently shakes a few drops of water from the pine branches, as if to reinvigorate Abo. In an instant, he senses that all the elements of nature are speaking the same language, as if a wave were being sent out from this shore, a wave penetrating to the farthest reaches of the universe Under the tree, the vines, dance and sway, like so many wooden wind chimes producing a jingling chorus, as the trunk and needles slowly dance like billowing waves!

Then the wind picks up steam, dispelling the calm, stirring the thousand different feeling tones of the meadow. As the pine cones and little flowers fly about, the whole valley seems to hop with excitement. Abo senses that the Old Pine is happily smiling!

"This is the sound wave of the universe!"

Making this pronouncement, the Old Pine dances more intensely, its highly flexible trunk wondrously dancing out the supple movements of the wind. Smoothly extending and drawing in, at times the dance is vigorous, displaying more twists and turns than a ridgeline path.

"Wow! He has given himself over to the wind—" spontaneously compliments Abo, deeply moved by the sight.

Modestly accepting the unexpected compliment, the Old Pine commences to

dance with heart and soul.

“Hum” spontaneously chanting the subtle sound of the wind, Abo senses that all the life forms in front of his eyes are flying up so as to receive blessings and nourishment from the wind

At times the Wind whispers; at times it lithely rises; at times it vigorously gyrates Now and then the vines hanging from the tree give off their sonorous jingle, causing Abo to look up—

“Wow!”

In the oscillating movements of the glimmering branches and vines, Abo unexpectedly sees the lotus lounge chair! He sees it in the kaleidoscope of peculiar shapes being projected by the branches and vines!

Moved to reverential silence, Abo stands below the tree

At some point, the wind has died down.

Then a splitting sound is heard high above, and several supple and oddly shaped pieces of vine drop down from the upper section of the Old Pine.

Gazing upon these gifts from the Old Pine, Abo strokes them several times to gauge their angle and pliability.

“Don’t compare! Don’t conceive!” says Abo, both to the Foundling and to himself. “Understanding all things is tantamount to understanding your own mind. As a matter of course, the gentle wind will reveal to you the real appearance of all things.”

In an instant, Abo forgets both the Old Pine and the lotus lounge chair His entire awareness focuses on the life trajectory and rhythm of growth of the vines adorning the Old Pine.

“By closely listening to the sound of nature, you will come to know the most beautiful art in all the world!” In his state of self-forgetting, the erstwhile exhortation of the Old Pine flashes upon Abo’s awareness.



Everything suddenly becomes clear. Straightaway, Abo begins deftly weaving together the vines in accordance with their lines and angles

There in the mountain valley, the whirling wind once again stirs the ancient harmony of the Old Pine, lilting up and filling space—

“Whatsoever masterful artwork and craftsmanship exists in this world, it’s all an imitation of nature; it’s not something that can be created by mere human cleverness! These tree vines have taken shape over thousands of years in accordance with the movement of the wind. By attentively listening to the message of the wind and interacting with it, we come to understand the primordial aesthetics of the universe and realize that everything in it is a wonderfully ingenious creation of nature”

“Wow! Simply inconceivable! The legendary lotus lounge chair has reappeared in the world!” says the Foundling, seeing that exquisite chair right before his very eyes, sending his spirits soaring.

Just then, an ebullient joy incessantly surges through Abo’s heart; he remains silent, for any praise that might be offered would surely fall far short of the mark!

After a long while, Abo goes to the base of the Old Pine, looks up with an expression of unbounded joy and amazement, and says:

“Old Pine! Words cannot express my heartfelt gratitude!”

“I’ve merely followed the wind’s advice and given you a few pieces of old tree vines!” says the Foundling, interpreting the grave rustling of the Old Pine’s needles. “You’re the one who has understood the beautiful dance of the wind and perceived the tenacious yet pliable nature of the old vines, thereby completing your task. Without such sensitivity to the aesthetics of nature, no matter how excellent and plentiful your materials may be, you still wouldn’t be able to create the lotus chair.”

“If not for your guidance, how could I ever have perceived the beautifully unhindered curves of these ancient vines?” says Abo, visibly moved while stroking the massive trunk with both hands.

“The time is right! The time is right!” says the Old Pine with a laugh. After quite a while, feeling as though waking from some beautiful dream, Abo walks over to the chair and softly says:

“This lotus chair exactly conforms to the highest aesthetic standards of craftsmanship: ‘Moving freely, the mind remains at rest’!”

“Huh? What do you mean?” blurts out the Foundling, hovering off to one side.

“It moves in accordance with your will, and also sets your heart and mind at ease! Since it is naturally fashioned out of ancient tree vines, it has a kind of spiritual sensitivity by which it completely conforms to the requirements of whoever is sitting in it. In addition to perceiving your emotions and body temperature, it also perceives your thoughts, and moves in whatever way you so desire!”

Left speechless and overjoyed by Abo’s words, the Foundling swoops down for a closer look at the lotus chair. Unable to resist trying it out, the Foundling rocks and sways in rhythm with the soothing of the Old Pine.

“Truly beyond belief!” marvels the Foundling, finding out for himself how the lotus chair moves in accordance with his will.

“This lotus chair sure is incredible! To think that its design was lost!” reflects Abo, before recounting a story from long ago. “It’s said that when humans first saw the lotus chair, they vied with one another to copy it. They cut down old vines and did their best to imitate its inimitable style, but what they didn’t know was that the process of applying human artifice to the vines changed their supple and yielding quality, causing their spiritual sensitivity



to disappear. But they continued trying, until their vain contrivances finally caused the lotus chair to disappear altogether.”

“Ah—it certainly is beyond description! One of a kind in all the world!” says the Foundling, sitting on the chair, his incomparable comfort generating unending praise.

The voice of the Old Pine jangles in the wind:

“You are one of the only craftsmen capable of truly hearing the sound of nature; that’s why you have this opportunity to see the primordial aesthetics of the universe and cause the lotus chair to reappear in the world

“It’s the same in the human world! Only one whose wisdom is mature can enjoy unimpeded freedom. Don’t waste your time worrying about trivial matters. Instead, full apply yourself to directly observing, contemplating, and experiencing this boundless universe. Only then will you be able to understand the beautiful pulse of nature continually pouring forth!”

Like the affectionate words of the Wind, the Old Pine’s earnest and patient admonition reverberates through Abo’s heart

*

At dusk, Abo carries the lotus chair out of the deep mountain valley.

After seeing off his dear son, Abo takes up the Foundling and joyfully heads straight for the lamp-lit plaza.

“Even after all that, we’re still in time for tonight’s performance!” Abo tells the Foundling in a tone of one who has been spared some terrible disaster.

Another splendid night; the same anticipation. As everyone fervently chats

away, a familiar and welcome figure appears on the stage.

“A treasure trove? Just what is this treasure? And just where is it?

“Affectionately peering homeward, longing for home! Having endured so much hardship, how might the Treasure Seekers return to that pure homeland of theirs?

“These stories performed under the dreamlike starry sky each night—Do they inspire you to deeply contemplate the meaning of life?” Fuhua’s mellow and moving voice is the only sound heard in that otherwise silent square.

“The east—this is the land of legend!

“The east—this is the land of perfect purity!

“A mysterious snow-swept craggy summit—that’s where the message of life is being disclosed!

“Tonight, let us journey together to that kingdom of purity and beauty; let us fully experience the life of eternal purity of that marvelous kingdom

“When the armies of Mara residing in the heart are finally subdued, supreme wisdom is gained; then that fabled treasure is near indeed!”

Spellbound by the rhythmic cadence of Fuhua’s introduction, everyone in the audience has already entered into the mood of tonight’s performance.



The Sixth Night—The Kingdom of Miaozechan

△ A desolate wilderness

(A moonlit night in the wilderness. Uncompromising in the search for their homeland, the Treasure Seekers continue to rove far and wide.)

Child A: (singing)

Birds and beasts the trappers net avoid;
The prodigal son, the traveling trader find their way home.

Child B: (singing)

Flowers bloom, flowers fall endless change;
Arcadia at a distance scent of fall waning.

Child C: (singing)

Over there is the Wuling of my ancestors,
Those scions of nobility, a generation of tribulation;
Perhaps you have heard of that old homeland in a dream.

(The children stop and gaze into the distance.)

Children: (singing)

Longingly peering homeward,
Deeply yearning;
Princes lost on the way day and night,
Longing for that moon above their distant homeland;
Heads bent in silence against the cold evening wind,
Cheeks covered with warm tears,

Pearls sobbed by a mermaid.

(The children head off into the distance; the distant light fades to darkness.)

△ The Kingdom of Miaozechan

(Music suddenly becomes lilting, auspicious, and somewhat mysterious. Amidst ethereal clouds, Sarvajna leads Candraprabha, the Vagrant, and the Treasure Seekers towards a mountain peak. They gaze upon the craggy peak and its snow-swept, clouded slopes.)

Candraprabha: Who would have guessed that there is such a wonderful place hidden away in these verdant mountains!

Sarvajna: (smiling) The east—this is the land of legend. The east—this is the land of perfect purity!

Vagrant: Looking downwards, it appears as though the entire world is below our feet. It's like we're in a world beyond the world!

Disciple A: (puzzled) Master Sarvajna, is there really such a beautiful place in the world? This place—Is it another conjured city?

Sarvajna: (firmly) There are a great many pure and beautiful realms in the universe. They most certainly do exist in this great chiliocosm, just like the treasure trove we've been searching for all this time.

Disciple B: Just what is this place? How is it that as soon as we arrived here, a pleasant feeling has entered into my every pore? It's truly wonderful!

Sarvajna: This is the Kingdom of Miaozechan.

The Kingdom of Miaozechan is an exceedingly magical and mysterious realm



located in the east! In the Kingdom of Miao-zhan an ancient custom has been passed on for countless generations. Since time immemorial, early each morning, just as the sun is beginning to rise, all the civilian and military officials assemble next to a pond bordered by light-yellow willow trees and wait for the king to appear. Just as the first rays of the sun are beginning to shine, when the heart and mind are bright and receptive, the exceedingly wise king gives a talk on the meaning of life and how to overcome the armies of Mara, the Evil One.

As a result, for as long as anyone can remember, the people of Miao-zhan, from the high ministers right down to the commoners, have always given great importance to truth and searching for the meaning of life. Consequently, they are endowed with the highest nobility of character, and the entire kingdom is brimming with peace and happiness, right down to the last inch.

Candraprabha: (pointing towards a spot in the gradually receding mist)
Look!

(As the sky slowly brightens, the King of Miao-zhan gradually comes into sight, and then the officials and citizens assembled next to the willow pond. As the first rays of the morning sun break through layer upon layer of fog, a golden lotus slowly rises up in the pond. Seated on the golden lotus is the King of Miao-zhan.)

King: (singing)

A mid-autumn afternoon walking along a narrow path;

I walk along last year's path,

Covered in weeds seemingly familiar.

A mid-autumn afternoon walking along a narrow path;
I walk along a seemingly familiar
Narrow path;
Cold wind and rain,
Hard to say if it's real or a dream.

A thunderclap of warning,
Startled, I shout;
That overgrown place last year,
That windy and rainy season last year,
Those trailing snowflakes last year;
Your companions in wandering.

Where are you?
Where are you?

(During the song, the sky brightens. Sarvajna leads his group towards the pond. While singing a verse of praise, the citizens of Miaozhan part to both sides, as though welcoming the new arrivals.)

Candraprabha: Master Sarvajna, I seem to be in a wonderful dream.

(The golden lotus radiates a brilliant golden light.)

King: Venerable Sarvajna, so glad to see that you haven't forgotten our appointment!



Sarvajna: Your unremitting efforts in establishing such a beautiful and stately kingdom truly put me to shame!

King: You've made such an arduous journey, enduring endless hardship while leading these Treasure Seekers on a search for the treasure trove. I often think about your lofty vows and actions—now there's something worthy of admiration!

(A general suddenly rushes over to the side of the pond.)

General: Your Majesty! The benighted neighboring kingdom, headed by none other than the cruel and ferocious Mara, the king of samsara, where there has long been widespread indignation and discontent, has become increasingly volatile recently due to several years of famine. Mara has long cast a covetous eye on our peaceful and prosperous kingdom. Now he has finally decided to make a move—he has launched an all-out assault on the Kingdom of Miao-zhan

King: It seems that we can no longer turn a blind eye to his treacherous machinations!

Sarvajna: (nodding) Ah! What a rare opportunity! Please allow my disciples to accompany your army on the battlefield, so as to hone their skills in battling the armies of Mara.

King: (to the assembly, in a bell-like voice) I've always stressed the importance of searching for the meaning and purpose of life, transcending suffering, and not contending with the world. But now the malevolent Mara has launched a massive assault! People of Miao-zhan, we need to defend our kingdom of purity and goodness from this vicious assault. Who is willing to join the counter attack?

(Everyone raises a hand and shouts in affirmation.)

Crowd: Me! Me!

King: Such great morale! Let's waste no time in assigning roles and defeating Mara.

Generosity, Morality, take the left flank and lead an offensive on the City of Hatred!

Patience, Energy, take the right road and lead an assault on the City of Vexation!

Concentration, you take charge of the central column and position it in defense of the citadel!

Learning, Observation, and Suchness, as the Three Wise Generals of the Dharma, you are highly skilled in military strategy. Form a joint command and lead the three branches of the armed forces on both flanks in an all-out frontal assault on the Kingdom of Ignorance. Give them a thrashing they will never forget!

Crowd: (shouting together) Frontal assault on the Kingdom of Ignorance!
Frontal assault on the Kingdom of Ignorance!

(As the troops rush about and fall into formation, the entire citizenry comes out to send them off. The army sets out into the dark night with great strength and vigor. Stage goes dark.)

△ Battlefield

(The booming of the war drums echoes far and wide. The stage slowly becomes visible, revealing a night sky red with signal fires. In the



encampment of the Kingdom of Miao-zhan, the Three Wise Generals of the Dharma convene a meeting with their high-ranking officers.)

Patience: The enemy forces are well equipped with magic powers, but nothing our crack troops skilled in the 18 sense realms won't be able to handle.

Concentration: "Capture the leader and the gang will collapse." If we can manage to capture Mara, his army will retreat and our casualties will be minimized.

Energy: You're right! However—now that the two armies are poised for battle, we must be careful to not underestimate the enemy; for the slightest mistake could result in our kidnap team being captured.

Three Generals: All your views are quite good. Whatever tactics the enemy may employ, as long as we use wisdom, carefully deliberate, and remain calm and courageous, then we are sure to be victorious.

(standing up, observing the night sky, and turning to the officers) It's now late; taking turns, make sure that one of you is always awake, in case the enemy launches a sneak attack. The others should rest up in preparation for the big battle tomorrow!

Officers: (bowing with hands joined in front of chest) Yes Sir!

(Stage goes dark. Moments later, the sky slightly brightens; then a bugle call resounds throughout the mountain valley, followed by the sound of innumerable horses galloping. The King of Miao-zhan and Sarvajna lead Candraprabha to a high vantage point.

As the war drums boom below, Miao-zhan's main forces stand in full battle array. Just as Candraprabha notices a beam of light radiating from the tuft

of white hair between the King's eyebrows, a heavenly sound of pure bliss begins to fill the sky.

The Three Generals each make the great seal gesture with their hands, step forward onto the battlefield, and sit down cross-legged so as to form a perfectly symmetrical triangle. Then they close their eyes and enter into a state of deep concentration.)

Three Generals: (calm and composed) It's said that the realm of compassion is boundless, and that the sea of wisdom is perfectly calm. But suddenly —

(turning and singing in a bold, heroic voice) the armies of Mara disturb the mind. The desires of the six senses—eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind—are formidable indeed. If they give in to temptation, then the path to enlightenment is blocked—

(Generosity, Morality, Patience, Energy, and Concentration respectively appear, repeatedly intoning “Mind at peace.”)

The Citadel of Nirvana will be destroyed, the Triple Gem will be impaired, the Dharma Treasure will be looted, and the fire of the passions will penetrate right up to the heavenly realms

(The Three Generals transform into the sixth perfection—Wisdom—whereupon the Five Officers take up their respective positions, accompanied by marching music.)

Three Generals: (singing; transmitting compassion)

Savage fighting before our eyes; lest the Buddhadharma come to destruction, let us join together as the sixth perfection—Wisdom.

(Drum roll sounds; each Perfection calls out respectively: Generosity,



Morality, Patience, Energy, Concentration, Wisdom.)

Let us adopt the means necessary for defeating the six armies of Mara.

(Bugle sounds; the Miao-zhan army moves into action.)

Six Perfections: (chorus; vigorously) First of all, dispatch emptiness!

(Miao-zhan army intones in a clear and concentrated voice: “All phenomena fundamentally have no true abiding; they only arise through causes and conditions.”)

Go and sound out the armies of Mara, the enemy encamped in the valley of the five aggregates.

(Miao-zhan army intones, “form, feeling, perception, conditioning, consciousness.”)

His army is 84,000 strong!

(Miao-zhan army intones, “Defilements are innumerable! Defilements are innumerable! Defilements are innumerable!”)

This calls for a brilliant strategy; let us make a roll call of the 18 realms—

(Miao-zhan army repeatedly intones in a low, level tone: “eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, mind; form, sound, smell, taste, touch, mind-object; eye-consciousness, ear-consciousness, nose-consciousness . . .”)

With insight into the essential nature of mind as our war cry, with Patience and Energy as our commanding officers, let us defend the Citadel of Truth!

(As the chanting continues, the rank-and-file soldiers orderly move forward and take up eight positions, forming encircling arrays. Then the Six Perfections and the entire army gradually form into a mandala.

Amidst loud and sonorous celestial music, they all chant in a low and stately

tone; after reaching a crescendo, the chanting suddenly ends, followed by perfect silence.)

Six Perfections: (chanting in a deep, compassionate tone)

But—the troops spearheading the assault on the six armies of Mara have met stiff resistance and are now engaged in a pitched battle

(Amidst a gently lilting melody, the heavenly sound of pure bliss again resounds through space, spurring on the forces of Miao-zhan.)

Main forces of Miao-zhan: (chorus)

All good fortune is ultimately a matter of the wisdom and application of nonattachment; in this way we shall emerge victorious in today's fierce battle.

(While they sing their battle song, various brilliant lights flash in the sky; afterwards, three solitary beams of light illuminate the Three Generals. As the majestic music fills the sky, the Three Generals slowly stand up and face the hilltop in front.)

Three Generals: (singing, slow and solemnly)

Armed with mighty wisdom, we will destroy the armies of Mara in a single blow.

The eyes see no form; the ears hear no sound. United in spirit, we valiantly charge into battle; never retreating, we shall rout the six armies of Mara.

Let us pulverize the mountain of ignorance, fell the forest of defilements.

(in a deep, mild tone) Now body and mind are in a state of perfect equipoise,



as though reaching the other shore.
 The armies of Mara are retreating.
 Let us present the news to the King.

(The sky brightens, revealing the cloudless firmament. A large bodhicitta banner soars high in the sky; a heavenly sound of pure bliss fills space; flowers rain down; stage goes dark.)

△ Back in the Kingdom of Miaozechan, alongside the willow pond

(On a cold winter day, as the rain and snow descend on the Kingdom of Miaozechan, the entire population line the main road and celebrate the triumphant return of the Three Generals at the head of their victorious troops. In the middle of the willow pond the golden lotus slowly rises up, on which the King is serenely seated.)

King: (singing)

Ever since this moonlight has entered my heart,
 This splendor of the Buddha ever so deep,
 Has touched my brows;
 Ever since these paeans of praise have filled my ears,
 This wonderful temple has been silently
 Floating before my eyes.

This anxious concern for it is decreed,
 That wonderful temple turns to dust the lotus meets its end.

You with sober hearts quickly wake;
If in the world someone attains buddhahood,
A gap will immediately open up in the sky,
A great rain will inundate the land.

You with sober hearts quickly wake;
Awake for nothing can be grasped.
This is the essential nature of the world,
Flower ever tranquil leaf ever serene.

(As the King sings, the cheering people shower flowers down on the Three Generals and their troops. Once the entire army falls into array next to the pond, the Three Generals step forward and salute the King.)

Three Generals: Your Excellency, our forces have done what was to be done. We have routed the armies of Mara, eliminated Mara's influence in the three realms, stormed Mara's palace, and taken him prisoner. We now await your orders.

King: Well done!

(facing the people) This time Mara's assault employed a villainous scheme. If not for the penetrating foresight of the Three Wise Generals of the Dharma, Mara would have succeeded in undermining our troops' morale, throwing them into confusion and disarray. But they secured victory by using their three officers—Morality, Concentration, and Wisdom—to capture the three forms of Mara—Greed, Hatred, and Delusion. Come! I will now open the treasury and lavish valuable gifts on our triumphant forces!



(Treasure chests brought out amid cheers. Off to one side, the smiling Three Generals bow their heads towards their officers and troops.)

Sarvajna: Having returned in triumph, the never-retreating light of great concentration has appeared between the Three Generals' eyebrows.

King: (smiling toward the Three Generals) Ah—You have completed your great mission!

(The King's topknot begins to emit the dazzling light of incomparable wisdom.

The bodies and minds of the amazed onlookers are bathed in light. The King stretches out his hand and removes a bright jewel from his topknot.)

King: (loudly announcing) This precious gem which I keep in my topknot is rarely shown to anyone, for it enshrines the "miraculous lotus." Only those who have made a truly great contribution are worthy to receive it. The Three Generals' victory over Mara is such a great achievement. Thus today I present them with this precious gem.

Three Wise Generals of the Dharma, be sure to honor and take good care of this precious gem.

(The Three Generals kneel down to receive the gem; heavenly flowers rain down from the sky, and splendid harp music rises up.)

Candraprabha: Master Sarvajna, as a result of this wonderful victory, we feel as though we have awoken from a dream lasting millions of aeons! It's as if we have glimpsed the shadow of the treasure trove!

Sarvajna: As long as you recollect this experience, conquer the demons in your heart, and attain supreme wisdom, then that treasure trove is never far away.

(A bright light pervades the stage; seated on the golden lotus, the King sings in a lofty, resonant voice.)

King: (singing)

You are a drifting cloud,
I am water;
You meander through the sky,
I flow over the earth.
When I am clear and tranquil,
I fortuitously reflect your image,
so free.
Then I ascend on wings of sunlight,
Up to the highest heavens,
To join you;
To serenely
Traverse the horizon.

Then you let loose the spring thunder of compassion,
Transforming into a life-giving rain,
Sending me back to the river.
Ever with me, night and day,
As I travel the earth.
I am the drifting cloud,



You are water.

Ah!

Now I see; you are me,

I am you.

(As the song continues, celestial flowers shower down; the golden rays of the rising sun shine forth; in the pond, lotus flowers bloom all about and lotus leaves glitter with dew.)

— Curtain closes —



17 23

The Twenty-third—The Goldsmith

*Unbounded love for all beings in the entire universe—this is beauty.
Beauty is applied philosophy.*

*When truth and beauty coexist, then you understand the profound
subtlety of the world—just like a white horse galloping into a
cluster of reed catkins; just like a silver cup filled with white snow
in the snow-swept Himalayas.*





Ten Catties of Gold

Early in the morning, the Green Bamboo Cliff has an alluring freshness and tranquility. This morning an unexpected visitor approaches on the narrow path through the bamboo forest.

A gauzelike meandering mist plays hide-and-seek with the bamboos and the wind.

Of all the inhabitants in this large city, Abo and the Foundling are always the first to rise, for they take great delight in imbibing the brisk morning air and collecting the first rays of the early morning sun. Just as Abo picks up the Foundling and happily sets off for another day of roaming about in search of secluded places of natural beauty, the sound of sturdy footsteps arises on the other end of the path.

“Eh? Has someone woken up before us today?” wonders the Foundling.

“Who is it?” calls out Abo, coming to a halt, then listening with a sense of happy expectation.

In a moment, a tall and stately figure bathed in the green glow of the bamboos emerges from the silky mist and strides towards them. Overjoyed, Abo calls out:

“Oh? It’s the goldsmith of Lingxu Village!” Abo calls out in a tone of joy and surprise.

Straightaway, Abo rushes forward, tightly grasps the Goldsmith’s hands, and says in a loud, astonished voice:

“What a pleasant surprise! It’s the Goldsmith! I wasn’t expecting you to suddenly turn up at my little Green Bamboo Cliff. I must be dreaming?”

“Ha-ha! I haven’t seen you for ages!” says the Goldsmith with a voice as clear as a mighty bell. “Master craftsman, this Green Bamboo Cliff of yours is even lovelier than I imagined!”

As they fervently chat, Abo leads the Goldsmith to his home.

Along the way, the great respect and deference Abo extends to the Goldsmith arouses the Foundling’s curiosity, causing him to conjecture that this is no ordinary visitor.

From a distance, the old Goldsmith has an imposing and awe-inspiring air about him. But when the Foundling draws near, he discovers that under his silky, silvery hair is a face exuding both wisdom and childlike sincerity, and expressing a reassuring and harmonious disposition.

“This old Goldsmith sure is an intriguing person!” concludes the Foundling. As the Foundling silently looks on, Abo seats the Goldsmith in a comfortable seat next to the tidy and elegant west window and steeps a pot of fragrant tea. Facing one another, they leisurely savor the tea.

In the light of the early morning sun, after taking a sip of tea, the Goldsmith takes out from his waist pocket a small item wrapped in a plain piece of cloth, gingerly places it on the table, and unwraps it, revealing an exquisite wooden box. The Foundling notices a wonderful glimmer in the Goldsmith’s perspicacious eyes. After casting a smiling glance at Abo, the Goldsmith carefully opens the box.

“It’s a golden lion!” says the pleasantly surprised Abo, now having no doubts about the purpose of this surprise visit.

Seeing Abo’s uncharacteristic excitement, the Foundling is all the more convinced that there must be some special purpose for this visit by the Goldsmith. Indeed, from the moment the Goldsmith opened the box, the Foundling’s gaze has been glued to the majestic golden lion cast in a



squatting position.

Sturdy and delicate, the glimmering golden lion has an air of inviolable majesty and strength. Its appearance is so lifelike that it seems ready to give out a mighty roar at any moment.

“This is surely the Goldsmith’s masterpiece! It’s so exquisite; there can’t be anything like it at any of the gold shops in the entire city! Its entire body exudes a wonderful glow. As I look at it, it seems that it’s looking back at me! How intriguing!” declares the Foundling. The longer he looks at it, the more he squints, arousing his interest all the more.

Illuminated by the sunlight slowly beginning to stream through the window lattice, the golden lion radiates a dazzling light, and its wavy mane gracefully draping over its head appears to be bathed in a genial glow. Observing more closely, the lion has frizzy eyebrows; enchanting eyes; perfectly round nostrils; a slightly open mouth revealing its mighty teeth; ears standing straight up, as if attentively listening; thick hair evenly spread over its torso; a gracefully curving tail ending in a tuft; sturdy symmetrical shoulders; and powerful paws.

“What a vigorous lion!” thinks the Foundling. Unable to contain his curiosity, he asks:

“Oh golden lion; Can you tell me what wonderful place you are from?”

“We’re from Lingxu Village!” the Golden Lion unexpectedly replies, startling the Foundling with its roaring voice.

Although this is exactly the kind of voice one would expect of a lion, the Foundling didn’t really expect the Lion to answer. Thoroughly impressed with the Lion’s awe-inspiring bearing, the Foundling inquires further:

“Lingxu Village? Where’s that? Is it far from here? What sort of people live

there? Is their appearance as remarkable as yours?”

After quietly listening to the Foundling’s string of questions, the Lion smilingly replies:

“Lingxu Village is an ancient agricultural village located far from the din of the big city. No one really knows how old the village actually is, for our ancestors established it long ago deep in the mountains, in a place which is so remote that very few outsiders visit there, not even migratory birds. As a result, the residents of Lingxu Village have always been highly independent and self-sufficient.”

“Wow! This mysterious Lingxu Village of yours sounds like a genuine Arcadia! So remote that even the birds seldom visit. But” Looking like he’s thought of something, the Foundling asks himself, “I wonder if the Wind and Clouds have ever been there. Next time I see them I’ll have to ask!”

Hearing about this remarkable village, the Foundling excitedly wants to tell Abo all about it, but since Abo and the Goldsmith are still having an animated conversation, he turns to the Lion and says:

“You say that this Lingxu Village has been pretty much cut off from the rest of the world for a very long time. Yet it seems that Abo and the Goldsmith have known each other for quite a while!”

“For many generations, not a single resident of Lingxu Village has ventured into the outside world; indeed, this is the first time the Goldsmith has ever left the village. As for me, a thousand years ago I had the good fortune to visit the most flourishing city of that time, and this is only the second time I’ve been outside of Lingxu Village!” says the Lion, now happily on a roll. “One day, this old craftsman somehow found his way to our village. As it turned out, he and the Goldsmith really hit it off, and he ended up staying



for several months. Before long, these two had become bosom buddies.”

“Wow! Abo has been to that mysterious village of yours Fantastic!” the Foundling calls out admiringly, before inquiring further. “Eh? But if your village is so very difficult to reach, how did he manage to get there? And seeing that he liked it there so much, why did he decide to leave?”

“Perhaps he has some kind of karmic connection with our village! Or maybe it’s just that Abo is keen on roaming through the mountains, and somehow happened to stumble upon our village, just like that traveler did a thousand years ago.

“What is certain is that he liked our village very much. Yet he felt that he had to return to his home and take care of some unfinished business. So in the end he reluctantly left. Afterwards he never returned, and he hasn’t seen the Goldsmith again until today.”

Suddenly remembering a very important question, the Foundling urgently asks, “Why do you and Abo call this old man with an awe-inspiring countenance ‘the Goldsmith’? Is he the one who made you? And why was Abo so happy and surprised when he saw you, as though he had never seen you before?”

“You certainly are a curious kite!” remarks the Lion, revealing an interested expression before fielding the Foundling’s next string of questions. “It’s a long story. But—this is another one of the unique features of Lingxu Village.”

“Oh really? I can’t wait to hear about it!” says the Foundling, who, instead of taking the Lion’s friendly teasing to heart, becomes all the more interested.

“Don’t worry; that’s what I’m about to tell you!” says the smiling Lion, giving the Foundling a chance to calm down before leisurely recounting an

old story —

“Long, long ago, there was a village said to be the source of all the agricultural knowledge possessed by men. The name of that village was ‘Lingxu.’

“From ancient times right up to the present, Lingxu Village has always been a most peaceful and prosperous place. It is perpetually filled with dark green rice shoots, brilliant flowers, lush trees, and supremely splendid streams flowing with pellucid waters. What’s more, all the residents of Lingxu Village collectively own ten catties of gold which have been handed down from one generation to the next for as long as anyone can remember.

“These ten catties of gold have always been consigned to the care of the village goldsmith. Whenever there is a wedding in the village, the goldsmith uses these ten catties of gold to produce various ornaments for the festivities, such as musical instruments, and ornamental trees and birds; whenever there is a birthday celebration, the goldsmith uses that same gold to fashion various items which symbolize longevity, such as a drums, rice paddy, and model pavilions; whenever a child is born, the goldsmith fashions various auspicious items, such as ink stones, canaries, and seven-holed flutes.

“In this way, this ten catties of gold has always remained the common property of the entire village, and takes on a new appearance to suit each occasion. For newlyweds, it becomes a zither or a flowering tree; for those blessed with a baby, it becomes an inkstone or a flute. Thus this same ten catties of gold is continually being refashioned by the goldsmith into new forms, and every family in the village gains possession of it at one time or another in accordance with the occasion. The only difference is that the wealthier families retain possession of it for a bit longer, say, one or two



years, while the less wealthy families keep it for a shorter amount of time, say, one or two months.

“From generation to generation, the village goldsmith has always been responsible for refashioning and reallocating this ten catties of gold in this way.”

The more the Foundling hears, the more curious he becomes about the ancient village of Lingxu, prompting him to ask:

“Wow! As you describe it, the goldsmith has quite an important role in the village! But just what are the qualifications for becoming the village goldsmith?”

“In Lingxu Village the position of goldsmith is passed on from master to apprentice. In addition to the practical requirements of extensive learning and technical skill, the goldsmith has to have a sharp and sensitive mind, so as to be able to ascertain the villagers’ needs. Most important of all, the goldsmith has to be generous and eager to serve others!”

“Wow! As you describe it, the village goldsmith is no ordinary person.”

“That’s right! The goldsmith has to be a highly refined and cultured person. Only someone with a high degree of wisdom, artistic ability, and personal integrity is capable of inspiring the confidence of the entire village and properly carrying out the duties incumbent on this position.”

“Ah, so that’s why the very first time I saw the Goldsmith I immediately sensed that there was something different about him,” spontaneously praises the Foundling after pondering for a moment.

“Over the course of thousands of years, this ten catties of gold has been refashioned innumerable times by the remarkably adroit hands of successive generations of goldsmiths; yet its total weight has always remained exactly

ten catties. Once it was in the form of innumerable grains of gold dust; another time it was cast into the form of a lion; yet its essential nature has always remained the same. Also, every time the village goldsmith completes a new piece, he makes an illustrated record of how he fashioned it; such records currently number in the tens of thousands!” says the Lion, pausing for a moment before continuing. “Now, the occasion successive generations of goldsmiths have looked forward to the most is the one which requires them to refashion these ten catties of gold into a Lion. But that doesn’t happen very often, because a golden lion is only made for a very special and rare occasion. That’s why the old craftsman Abo was so overjoyed when he saw the golden lion, for he knows full well how rarely such a piece is made!”

“Golden Lion, isn’t that you?” calls out the Foundling, sounding as if he has discovered some rare treasure.

“That’s right!” Having completed his long story, the fervent and self-assured Lion poses a question of his own:

“What you presently see is a golden lion, but do you know what its essential nature actually is? For instance, years ago, during the time of Abo’s visit to Lingxu Village, the Goldsmith fashioned me into various forms, including a drum, an inkstone, and a flute. But each time I took on a different form, did my essential nature remain the same or not?”

“Um?” Even after thinking it over, the Foundling is still stumped.

While the Lion was telling the Foundling all about Lingxu Village, Abo and the Goldsmith have been happily chatting away.

“Ever since leaving Lingxu Village, I’ve often returned there in my dreams; yet I dare not entertain such an extravagant notion. So your sudden



appearance today is like a dream come true; in addition to drinking tea together and enjoying a long chat, we can admire this wonderful lion you've fashioned out of the ten catties of gold. Your visit surely is a delightful occasion—a veritable blessing sent from heaven!" says Abo, as a joyous expression flashes across his sagely face.

As the Goldsmith continually nods in agreement, a bright glow of understanding flashes through his eyes.

"Old Goldsmith, just what is the special occasion for which you have fashioned this golden lion?" asks Abo in a tone of pious admiration.

"It's a truly intriguing story! Do you remember how I once told you that a golden lion had not been fashioned in Lingxu Village for nearly a thousand years?"

As he speaks, the Goldsmith's resonant voice becomes soft and gentle, and his expression becomes increasingly mystical. Taking a sip of tea, he speaks in a low voice, as though he has entered into another world—

"Legend has it that a thousand years ago a certain itinerant yogi was wandering deep in the mountains and happened to come across Lingxu Village, causing quite a happy stir amongst the normally tranquil villagers.

"It was also at that time that the very first golden lion was fashioned by the village goldsmith.

"Now, this yogi was endowed with both erudition and a high degree of spiritual attainment. In fact, he had dedicated his life to sharing his profound wisdom with others, and even the king invited him to give teachings at the royal court. During the course of one such teaching engagement, one night the yogi dreamed about an ancient village hidden away deep in the mountains, where there was an extremely rare and wonderful golden lion. Based on the information gleaned from that dream, he managed to find

his way to the peaceful and prosperous village of Lingxu. At that time the village goldsmith was about to gather up the ten catties of gold and refashion it into one of the customary designs. However, by virtue of his great wisdom and sincerity, this yogi succeeded in convincing all the villagers to have the gold made into a lion for the very first time. After the goldsmith turned out an exquisitely crafted gold lion, the yogi took it back to the royal court and used it to demonstrate to the king how all things in the universe undergo infinite transformations, yet their essence remains the same. Through the use of this skillful means, the king and all his subjects gained deep insight into a profound truth. Thereafter, everyone in the kingdom enjoyed happiness, health, and a long period of prosperity.

“Afterwards, the yogi promptly returned the golden lion to Lingxu Village, and presented the village with a set of scriptures as a token of his appreciation. This wonderful story has been handed down from generation to generation. At some point long ago, the villagers decided to establish a new tradition—if in the future a person of supreme wisdom comes to the village and gives teachings on these scriptures, then the ten catties of gold will once again be refashioned into the form of a lion!

“Yet, for a very long time no such teacher again came to our village, and it’s now been a thousand years since a golden lion has been made there. However, over ten years ago a highly determined and pure-minded youth set out in search of the legendary Lingxu Village. After ungrudgingly enduring a great deal of hardship, he eventually found his way to our village.

“Afterwards, that young man completely dedicated himself to studying those scriptures brought to the village nearly a thousand years previously.

“While staying in our ancient village out in the misty mountains, day and night he poured himself into the study of that vast collection of scriptures



written on palm leaves. At the same time, he also spent long periods contemplating the wisdom of the natural world. After continuing in this way for over ten years, he fully penetrated the profound meaning of the scriptures and gained supreme insight into the wonderful Dharma. Out of compassion for later generations, he took the profound teachings contained in those scriptures and refashioned them into a wonderful and moving drama titled *Seven Nights Waiting*, thereby making them more accessible to a wider range of people.

“Strangely enough, at that time I dreamed of a stately golden lion. The next day, I told the young man about my dream. He recognized it as an auspicious omen and suggested that the time was right for again fashioning a golden lion. Then we convened a meeting with the entire village, during which the young man’s boundless wisdom, great piety, and highly refined aesthetic sense convinced everyone that it was indeed the right time to collect the ten catties of gold and once again fashion it into a lion!

“In order to fulfill his aspiration to share the wisdom he had gained with society at large, the young man left the mountains and returned to the world. But before doing so, he and the villagers agreed that on the final night of the final performance of *Seven Nights Waiting* I would be on hand and put the golden lion on display as a blessing from the people of Lingxu Village. At the same time, we would make special arrangements for the entire play to be performed in grand style in Lingxu Village.”

Deeply moved and rapt in attention by the Goldsmith’s detailed account of the events which have led up to his sudden appearance, Abo says:

“So then, I take it that the young man who once visited your village is actually Fuhua, the director of the White Lotus Theatrical Troop, and that

you have come here to put this golden lion on display!”

“You got it! Several years ago Fuhua formed the White Lotus Theatrical Troop, and since then they have been presenting *Seven Nights Waiting* in far-flung cities and towns as a way of casting the seeds of wisdom and purity far and wide. And amazing as it may seem, as it turns out, the final performance of this play is being held nearby your home at Green Bamboo Cliff!”

As the Goldsmith finishes his sentence, he and Abo break into a hearty laugh.

Just then, the Golden Lion speaks a verse. Baffled, the Foundling waits silently on one side, preparing to ask Abo for help!

Don't use your eyes to see me,
Don't use your ears to hear me,
Don't use your sense of touch to feel me,
Don't use your mind to conceive of me;
For I am the eternal mark of truth.
Become tranquil!
Become even more tranquil!
Use your innate true self to experience.
Then one day you will discover—
I am you, and you are me!

Just as the Goldsmith is about to put the Lion back in its case, the Lion presents a riddle:

“How much gold is there in the entire world?”

“Oh, such an interesting question!” says Abo with a knowing smile upon



hearing the Foundling's interpretation.

He recalls the dew-laden rice tassels glittering in the morning sun the late-blooming sea of golden flowers in the high meadows; the golden-yellow tassels in the fields, bursting forth like stars in the sky; the endless expanse of golden bran covering the great earth; the whispering swirl of the River; the incense trees in the pine forest formed from crystalized charcoal the conversation between the wind and the Old Pine in the mountain valley, as if it were still ringing in his ears!

"Abo, just how much gold is there in the entire world?" the Foundling reiterates.

Still contemplating the Lion's riddle, Abo's repeats:

"Don't use your eyes to see me; Don't use your ears to hear me; Don't use your sense of touch to feel me; Don't use your mind to conceive of me"

Suddenly the Rice Seedlings, the Flowers, the River, the Old Pine, and all their distinctive marks appear in Abo's mind. Their brilliant and marvelous appearance touch on his heartstrings and ripple across his pellucid awareness.

"Gold is present throughout the world! The original and pure appearance of life is present everywhere," Abo spontaneously states in a tone of praise.

Then Abo smilingly launches the thoroughly amazed Foundling high up into the sky, giving him the opportunity to consult with the sky so as to find for himself an answer to the Lion's question.

In the afternoon they arrive at the mouth of the river.

The adjacent hills covered with dainty catkins; the half-submerged rocks of various sizes poking out of the water; the verdant grass lining the riverbank; the distant steep slopes spread with various shades of brown-green scrub

setting off the rich hues of the river bank; the distant mountains soaring up into the clouds—all this is reflected in the estuary of the river. Below the nearby bridge, gleaming waves radiate across the crystalline water; further out, the open sea stretches out under the azure vault of heaven.

Observing the scene in detail fills body and mind with boundless joy!

“Abo, how is it that your eyes, ears, nose, and even shoulders resemble those of the Golden Lion?”

“Um—perhaps the Golden Lion is still roaming around in both our minds!” replies Abo, smilingly looking down and adjusting the Foundling’s tail.

“Oh my! Even your manner of speaking sounds like that of the Lion!” remarks the Foundling before leaping from Abo’s shoulder and soaring into the sky.

In the twilight sky, the Foundling joyously swirls and dives

In the distant sea, golden waves rise up as far as the eye can see.

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As the time for the seventh night’s performance nears, the Foundling gracefully soars over the surf and is filled with joy by the sight of the setting sun, round and red, like a golden drum suspended on the western horizon.

“Hey, Foundling! Today is the Autumn Equinox!” announces Abo while admiring the sunset.

As wings formed from the rosy clouds of dusk carry away the wise and compassionate words spoken by the Golden Lion earlier in the day, the brilliant full moon silently rises up over the clusters of green bamboo.

The night that everyone has been expectantly waiting for has finally arrived.



Abo takes his usual seat on the square bathed in the pure light of the moon. As he leisurely waves a fan made of cattail leaves, the Foundling rests on his knee, full of joyous anticipation.

Once the audience is brought to attention by an elegant burst of music from a jade flute, a familiar figure draped in a long light-yellow robe gracefully appears on the stage. In the moonlight, his naturally curly hair takes on the appearance of wavelets on a pellucid sea, continually telling an eternally moving story.

“When I was staying in an ancient village, I once heard the following legend—

“When the world was first taking shape, just as the sun was setting in the western sky, the universe gave birth to an ancient agricultural village populated entirely by sages. Day in and day out, from sunrise to sunset, the residents of this village diligently cultivated the land. However, on the seven days preceding both the Autumn and Spring Equinox, they put down their hoes and plows and piously engaged in contemplation and spiritual practice.

“If an outsider was fortunate enough to be passing by during either of those one-week periods and participated in that week-long spiritual training session focusing on the amazing power of unshakable faith, then all his wholesome aspirations would come to realization!

“Dear friends, today is the Autumn Equinox! And for the preceding six nights we have together gone in search of the legendary treasure trove of life

“We’ve visited Jewel Tree Village, lamented the Scion Drifter, gone to a meadow high in the mountains, and woken up from a lovely dream of a conjured city. Do you recall that precious gem ensconced inside your lapel?

While witnessing that great battle in the Kingdom of Miao-zhan, perhaps that treasure trove suddenly appeared in your mind's eye.

“Perhaps a human life is really one long play, but we simply don't realize it! “Tonight we're going to explore the headwaters of the river of life, in search of our true home in the universe!”



The Seventh Night—Ranghe the Medicine King

Act one

△ Arcadia

(A vantage point swirling with clouds, affording intermittent views of Arcadia. On the mountain trail, several children shout and peer into the distance as they happily run off. Far off in the distance, three celestial beings happily converse.)

Celestial Being: (speaking)

Pinkish mist,
 Silky path of the moon,
 The secret Taoyuan Cave,
 Long concealing those sages of old;
 A precious map handed down,
 A courageous prince at long last,
 Dons that ancient armor;
 With hands trembling with gratitude,
 He takes up that weighty sword and shield,
 Resolutely
 Setting out on the road leading home.

(Distant shouts give the children encouragement.)

Children: (chorus)

The precious sword of the Vajra King,
Solid, unbreakable;
Incomparably sharp,
Its radiance dispels all darkness.

(The overjoyed children bound along the path towards Arcadia.)

Celestial Beings: (chorus)

Wind rustling the sparse bamboos,
A wild goose traverses the vast sky.

Child A: (singing)

Ah I've finally broken through that beguiling fog;
Road twisting, mountain turning,
Clouds spinning below my feet;
As it turns out, that ancient path lined with apricot trees,
Is just below my toes;
At the end of that ancient path lies
The splendid Palace of the Ancient Kings,
With a pair of golden lions in front of the gate,
Eyes turning out 32 auspicious marks waiting
For the vagabond prince to return from abroad,
Waiting a thousand years.

Celestial Being: (speaking)

In this boundless world eternally
Giving alms far and near gaining happiness and longevity.

(Arcadia in brilliant light)



Child B: (speaking)

Ah,

This is not a mirage,

This is not some lovely myth;

This truly is my ancestral homeland;

Lapis lazuli tiles self-produced moonlight,

Coral trees never withering;

Here the life transcendent unfolds,

Here the honeyed sword of the five desires is returned to its sheath.

Celestial Beings: (chorus)

Clothed in black, buried in the dark mud,

Lotus flowers all start out like this;

Coaxed out of the mud by the genial sunlight,

Opened by the morning sun; see that original intention.

(The children have a contemplative expression on their calm and happy faces as they observe the human world at the foot of the mountain of Arcadia.)

Child C: (speaking)

Genial sunlight

Illuminating the dust of the great trichiliocosm,

Each speck of dust adorned with innumerable blooming lotus flowers;

I gaze upon a golden lotus between my fingers,

Remembering

The lineage of the Tathagata drowning in the fivefold quagmire;

Alas this unsullied homeland;

How shall I remain there.

Celestial Beings: (chorus)

From tonight on, the dew turns to frost the moon brightens that native place;

Spring comes and goes in the blink of an eye just when shall I return?

(Having arrived at their homeland, the children gallantly stride out of their lovely house.)

Children: (speaking)

Harboring the lofty vow to return to the family of the Tathagata,

Step by step arrived;

First setting out on that long, long road,

Along the coast through mountains and valleys;

At a crossroads in the dark night,

Many a hardship depths of hell,

Repeatedly telling

The story of that Palace of the Ancient Kings,

So moving so true.

Celestial Beings: (chorus)

Flowers open, flowers fall on the altar,

Flowers fall, lotuses form a wonderful arrangement;

Who can penetrate this wordless teaching?

Emulating the lotus, proceeding on the strength of a vow.

(A powerful voice rises up in space, convulsing the earth and praising the children.)



Voice in space:
 Peaceful mountain gate,
 Buddhadharma ever thriving;
 The earth dragon,
 Protecting the Sangha, guarding the Dharma.

(Children's voices rise up; lights go out; a meteor shower briefly appears in the sky.)

Act two

Innumerable aeons ago, on the north bank of the Ganges River, at a place where the willow branches produce golden ripples, there lived a great being known as Ranghe the Medicine King.

While still a boy, Ranghe began studying all types of medicinal plants. He traveled up and down the Ganges studying the medicinal properties of the flora, and in time he mastered all the traditional plant lore extant in the world; there wasn't a single plant he was unfamiliar with.

Ranghe had a shed in a garden where he produced herbal medicines.

In the forest, about an arrow's shot behind his shed, there were several cliffs with tall waterfalls which looked like celestial serpents descending from the heavens. The sound of the waterfalls combined with the sound of the wind blowing on the thick thatch roof sounded just like a conch—

In the local village it was rumored that what Ranghe kept in this shed was the medicine of immortality; Ranghe's sons believed that it contained a pharmacopeia of concoctions with miraculous powers

On the bank of the Ganges

(At dusk, snow swirling around; not a bird in sight; the sound of hooves rises up from the distant riverbank; the silhouette of a man gradually appears.)

Man: Great Lord of Healing, an epidemic has broken out in the Kingdom of the Master of Medicine in the east; the king requests your assistance!

Ranghe: Calm down, calm down; I'll depart as soon as I have a word with my children!

(Summoning all his children, Ranghe makes an urgent exhortation.)

Ranghe: Children! I have to go on a long trip; I'll return within two or three days. While I'm away, no matter what, you must not enter my shed out in the forest!

Children: (together) Father, don't worry; we would never even think of setting foot in that shed!

(As Ranghe departs, he looks back several times, looking as if he wants to say more, but remaining silent; stage goes dark.)

△ The shed in the garden

(In one corner of the forest, a group of children deliberate.)

Elder Brother: Father has gone away on a distant journey, providing us with



a rare opportunity to go into his shed and find out just what is in there!

Second Eldest Brother: I've waited many years for this opportunity. Now's our chance to find out if what he keeps in that shed is the medicine of immortality or a miracle drug!

Little Brother: (shouting and jumping up and down) I want to go! I want to go with you!

(For some years now, the boys have been casting curious glances at the shed in the garden, but have never gone inside. Seeing that this is their big chance, they tiptoe through the forest towards the moonlit shed, their hearts pounding with curiosity. Arriving and opening the door, they see medicine bottles, medicine cabinets, an array of medicinal herbs, and a stove for decocting medicine.)

Little Brother: (mischievously and excitedly) Let's see who can find it first? I'm going to look for a secret hiding place!

(Little Brother runs off stage, followed by his brothers. On the curtain is seen their silhouettes happily rummaging around through boxes and cabinets; the moon rises into the center of the sky.)

Brothers: (dispirited) There's nothing special here!
Yeah, not even a rare medical book!

(Suddenly, the youngest brother shouts out from behind the curtain.)

Little Brother: I've found it! (The others quickly gather round him) I found

this dusty glass calabash. After brushing it off with my sleeve, I carefully opened it just a tiny bit. When I took a short whiff I felt totally dizzy, as if I were about to fly up into the sky; then a bunch of celestial maidens appeared right before my eyes

(The others crowd in for a closer look.)

Brothers: (in a ruckus) Let me see it! Let me see it!

What? No pills or powder inside?

It's just a small, transparent calabash!

Elder Brother: Everybody calm down! This could be dangerous

(Before he can finish his sentence, in the melee the lid pops completely off. A fine smoke floats up from behind the curtain, instantly affecting all of the children: some roll on the floor, some blabber incoherently, some look dazed and confused, others stare blankly. Then they all faint and the stage gradually goes dark. Several shooting stars cross the sky.)

(The oil lamp in front of the shed's western window lights up; Ranghe the Medicine King has returned.)

Ranghe: (heaving a deep sigh) Oh no! I hurried back as fast as I could, but I'm too late. These foolish children of mine have not heeded my warning; as a result, they have ingested something which has made them lose their minds!

(Ranghe opens his traveling bag, pulls out an antidote, and urges the children to swallow it. Those who were affected less severely do so and



slowly recover, but those who were more severely affected refuse to take the antidote. Amongst the latter are the two eldest and the youngest.)

Ranghe: Alas! These children have been so deeply affected that it's no use trying to reason with them. I'll have to employ some sort of skillful means
.....

(At dusk, Ranghe lights four oil lamps: one hanging in the center of the shed, and those hanging in front of the east-, south-, and north-facing windows. Then he sits in meditation below the west-facing window, from dusk until the sky is pitch black, and again from dawn until the first rays of brilliant sunlight appear The shed fades away; in the background are seen transparent waves of light accompanied by the bright sound of the Ganges.)

△ Light waves on the Ganges

(Amidst sonorous birdsong, four elders appear near the river, all with a tall stature and extraordinary bearing, each wearing a robe of a different color: white, blue, yellow, and black. After greeting each of them by bringing his hands together in front of his chest and bowing, Ranghe departs. Beams of sunlight penetrate through the forest canopy and onto the ground strewn with fallen blossoms. On the ground dappled with shadow and light, there appear numerous bright mirrors set at different angles, each one reflecting one of the four elders: the Grandee of Sarathi, the Chief of Jewel Tree Village, the Venerable Sarvajna, and the King of Miao-zhan. Then the four elders walk deep into the forest. Stage slowly goes dark.)

(On that moonlit autumn night, the only sound to be heard in that vast forest is the call of the nightingale echoing through the mottled shadows of the trees. Suddenly, from behind a large tree, one by one, there appear the Elder Brother (the Scion Drifter), the Second Eldest Brother (the Vagrant), and the Little Brother (Candraprabha). Along with several other children, they confusedly grope about, as if they were trying to catch the falling leaves. After a while, they gradually disperse in all directions, leaving the forest without a soul in sight. Amidst the fluttering leaves and swirling snow, a young child appears.)

Young Child: (singing in a bright, euphonious voice)

How long ago I left my master's hand, I remember not;

I began following the whims of the wind,

Smugly

Dancing with the white clouds chasing after the birds;

Now and then halting,

Observing the farmers planting the oxen ploughing;

Today I've arrived at Abo's Green Bamboo Cliff;

Abo has dressed me in new clothes christened me

The Foundling.

(The young child chases after a low-flying canary; stage suddenly goes dark.)

△ The shed in the garden

(Amidst the sound of a murmuring stream, Sarvajna appears on stage



leading Candraprabha, the Vagrant, and the Treasure Seekers.)

Sarvajna: Here on the north bank of the Ganges River lives Ranghe the Medicine King. We grew up together in the Palace of the Ancient Kings. While still a boy, Ranghe vowed that one day he would become a great lord of healing. He spent his entire youth studying all types of medicinal plants, and today his knowledge of herbal medicine is second to none. His medicine shed is in this forest. It's quite a unique and mysterious place. All the people in this region are highly curious about it, but for several decades now, not a single person has dared to even go past the wall enclosing the surrounding garden. Now I'm going to take you to visit that mysterious shed

(Together they approach the shed in the woods. All of a sudden, the cliffs, the waterfall towering down from the heavens like a white dragon, the gurgling sound of flowing water—all this sets off in Candraprabha a vague and distant memory.)

Candraprabha: (to himself) Why is it that this place seems so familiar?

(The wall enclosing the garden is formed out of rocks resembling human skulls, the eye sockets of which are painted with various colors and glimmer in the moonlight.

A pensive voice sings in the garden.)

Ranghe: (singing)

All I hope for,

Is to again summon you into this dream;

In the dream chant scriptures enjoy the midnight with you.
Ring of a bell,
Into that dream, meditating entering into the sound of cicadas buzzing,
Perhaps you don't know my former sadness;
I once experienced your diligence.
I take a green-blue boulder as my pillow that hoped-for green-blue boulder,
As though exhausted transforming into the South Sea;
Flowing past in a continuous stream,
Crashing of the waves;
All I can hope for,
Is to again summon you into this dream.

(Singing ends; Sarvajna and the others arrive.)

Sarvajna: My, oh my! It's been so long since I've seen you. From the way you are singing under the moonlight, I can tell that you are still as cultured as I remember you to be.

Ranghe: I think—you've come at just the right time.

Sarvajna: Indeed I have! In fact, for the sake of showing these children how to find the treasure trove of life beyond the dusty world, I should have brought them to visit you earlier!

(Ranghe compassionately looks over Candraprabha, the Vagrant, and the Treasure Seekers, and then speaks to Sarvajna.)

Ranghe: It must have been rough going lately!

Candraprabha: (hesitating before mustering up his courage) Your face seems



so familiar; have we met somewhere before?

Ranghe: (smiling) Most of the time I'm out in the tranquil forest or else here in this shed

(As Ranghe and Candraprabha converse, the others curiously gather round.)

Disciple A: Look at all these rare plants around the shed! What a delightful scent they give off!

Disciple B: Sure is! But—if Master Sarvajna didn't bring us here, I don't think I'd come anywhere near this place.

Disciple C: Me too! I mean, just look at this wall. It's made of boulders which look just like human skulls and give off all sorts of different colors. Pretty spooky stuff!

Candraprabha: Ranghe, what's the story with this unusual wall of yours? Is it meant to scare people away?

Ranghe: As the old adage goes, "Those who use it properly live; those who don't die." A powerful medicine can become deadly to a person who doesn't know how to use it. That's why I have to be very careful. But when it comes to my own foolish and curious children, I now know that I haven't been careful enough

(As Ranghe speaks, the Chief of Jewel Tree Village approaches leading some children, and the Grandee of Sarathi approaches leading the Scion Drifter, happening to arrive at the same time.)

Candraprabha: (joyously) Look! It's the Chief of Jewel Tree Village and the Grandee of Sarathi! What a surprise!

Sarvajna: My old friend from the Palace of the Ancient Kings is arranging a get-together! It seems that Ranghe wants us to learn about his unsurpassed medical skills.

Chief: You're right! Ever since I gave my children those carts yoked with white oxen, they've been cultivating supreme wisdom and yearning to return to their native place. That's why I've brought them here on this distant journey!

Grande: It's well known that Ranghe has a vast knowledge of medicinal herbs, and that he travels far and wide to use it for the benefit of all sentient beings. So anyone in search of his true homeland need only seek the guidance of Ranghe the Medicine King!

Vagrant: Ranghe, during my travels I've heard lots of people say that in your shed you keep the medicine of immortality. Is it true?

Scion: And others say it's a miracle drug!

Candraprabha: Just what is it you keep in this shed of yours?

Everyone: (ruckus) What sort of medicine is it?

(Ranghe smiles and remains silent. The sound of horse hooves approaches; someone sounds the brass ring hanging on the metal gate facing east and covered with flowering wisteria vines. Recognizing that the sound is a password, Ranghe slowly opens the door, revealing a man with a wan and sallow face. Displaying the utmost respect and courtesy to Ranghe, the man enters and makes a deep bow, his clasped hands reaching down to his knees.)

Man: Great Lord of Healing, we need your help! The epidemic has reappeared in Kingdom of the Master of Medicine in the east, and now



it's spreading. This time it's so severe that even the water plants along the Ganges are withering. The king has sent me to request your help; please come at once; there's no time to waste!

Scion: What's this all about?

(As everyone looks at each other in puzzlement, Ranghe shakes his head and sighs deeply.)

Ranghe: Alas, in the Kingdom of the Master of Medicine in the east there is an age-old misconception that every plant whatsoever can be used as medicine.

Sarvajna: (anxiously) I thought that long ago you taught them your motto, "Some herbs heal; some herbs harm."

Ranghe: (sighing with emotion) The problem is that they just don't listen. As a result, these sort of epidemics regularly break out there.

Grandee: A pernicious misconception indeed! Using the wrong medicine makes it even more difficult to treat an illness.

Ranghe: Right! This is exactly what I was worried about. Yet, I can't just stand by and watch them go to ruin! I'll try again, but seeing that now the situation is even more severe, I'll have to take all three of you with me.

Sarvajna: I take it as my duty to go with you, but— (looks at the Treasure Seekers) what about these children?

Ranghe: They can stay at my house in the village, and while we're gone they can look after those kids of mine. However, I must first sternly warn them that they must not enter my medicine shed in the garden!

(The elders nod in agreement and make the necessary arrangements; the

Grandee turns to the Scion.)

Grandee: Seeing that you're the oldest, I'm placing you in charge of these children. There is powerful and potentially dangerous medicine in that shed; don't let these foolish and curious kids go in there.

Scion: Will do! There's nothing to worry about!

△ Ranghe's home

(Ranghe's children are gathered together, talking in hushed tones; the Scion draws near to listen.)

Child A: (excitedly) Father's shed is so mysterious. Let's go in and take a look!

Child B: Yeah! Let's go in and find out once and for all what he keeps in there: the medicine of immortality, or some kind of miracle drug.

Child C: Yeah! Father has gone on a distant journey; now's our chance!

Scion: (anxiously) Forget it! Your father has given strict orders that no one may enter that shed; it's for your own safety.

Child A: (pleading) We just want to have a look; we won't take anything, and we'll be very careful. Uncle, don't worry—nothing will happen.

Child B: (rascally) And even if we do get poisoned, Father can give us an antidote.

Child C: Yeah! As long as we are careful, nothing will happen.

Children: (loud ruckus) Yeah! Nothing will happen!

Scion: This (tongue-tied)



(Seeing that the Scion is unable to quell the uproar and at a loss as to how to proceed, the Vagrant steps in.)

Vagrant: Actually, I'm also very curious about that shed. However, even though Ranghe is so very liberal and generous to everybody, he has doesn't want anyone to go in there without his permission. There must be a good reason for being so strict about this. So you really must not go in there

Scion: He's right! Before leaving, didn't your father tell you all to take good care of yourselves? You really should obey his words and not go in there.

(One by one the children grudgingly go to bed; the Vagrant blows out all the candles.)

(During the night, the clear and bright rays of the moon shine through the window lattice, illuminating Candrababha's face; he slowly wakes up and looks around.)

Candrababha: (alarmed) Hey, wake up; they've all disappeared!

(The Scion and the Vagrant quickly light lamps, sit up, and look around.)

Candrababha: (going out the door and pointing at the ground) Look!

Scion: (shouting in alarm) All these little footprints heading towards the forest Could it be—

Vagrant: Hurry up! Let's see if they are at the shed!

Candrababha: I hope they are alright!

Vagrant: We have to hurry up and stop them!

Scion: Hurry!

(The neigh of horses rises up in the forest; Ranghe appears with the three elders close behind.)

Scion: (pleasantly surprised) Wow! It's Ranghe; Ranghe the Medicine King is back!

Vagrant: (greatly relieved) And the elders are with him.

Sarvajna: What's happened?

Candraprabha: (nervously) Master Sarvajna! While everyone was sleeping, the kids snuck into the shed. What should we do?

(Ranghe picks a few stalks of a certain purple grass, places a single stalk in each person's mouth, and then leads them deep into the forest. Stage goes dark.)

(Stage lights go on. The children are all back at home receiving treatment; some have regained full consciousness; some are only semiconscious and tenaciously refusing to take the antidote; Candraprabha and the others stand on one side trying to persuade them.)

Ranghe: (concernedly) Alas! It's the same story all over again These foolish children are off the rails; they simply won't listen to my admonitions. As a result, they've again accidentally ingested that powerful medicine capable of inducing a terrible stupor when not used properly. Those who were only slightly affected have taken the antidote and are beginning to recover, but those who were severely affected still refuse to take it.



Candrababha: What can be done?

Ranghe: (looking at Candrababha with a faraway expression) I'll have to employ some kind of skillful means.

Candrababha: What's that?

(Ranghe silently shakes his head. After conferring with the three elders, he gives them the antidote, takes up his travelling bag, and goes out the door. Candrababha looks on in puzzlement; stage goes dark.)

△ Flowery meadow in the forest

(In a meadow filled with blooming flowers, the Vagrant and Candrababha look after the rambunctious children as they blissfully chase after butterflies and dragonflies.)

Vagrant: Ranghe has already been gone for several months, and there's still no news from him.

Candrababha: (worried) Sometimes they seem to be alright, at other times not; but they still refuse to take the antidote. What should we do?

Vagrant: Right! All we know is that Ranghe has gone to the Kingdom of the Master of Medicine, but we have no idea when he'll return.

(The Scion appears with a sad expression on his face; he calls together all the children and the three elders.)

Scion: Children, just now a messenger from the Kingdom of the Master of Medicine in the east delivered some unfortunate news. He told me that

Ranghe the Medicine King has died while in the Kingdom of the Master of Medicine.

(Everyone is heart-stricken; the children loudly weep.)

Child B: Daddy! I want my daddy!

Child A: Father is the only one who can save us. What will we do? What will we do?

All Children: Father! —

Chief: Everyone calls Ranghe “the great lord of healing.” While he was still alive there was still some hope for you. But now there is no one in the entire world capable of saving you. However, all is not lost. For prior to his departure, Ranghe entrusted me with a very powerful antidote. All you have to do is have faith in his ability and take this antidote; it may well save you.

Scion, Vagrant, Candrababha: He’s right! Better listen to what he says and take the antidote before it’s too late!

(The Chief of Jewel Tree Village picks up the bottle containing the antidote, opens it, and gives one pill to each of the children. While mournfully gazing upon the pill in each of their hands, a ray of bright light enters their benighted hearts, whereupon their obstinance and recalcitrance slowly softens and melts away. Then, one by one, each tearful child silently swallows the pill.

Afterwards, on the stage shrouded in a thick fog, the King of Miao-zhan appears seated on a golden lotus flanked by the Three Wise Generals of the Dharma—Learning, Observation, and Suchness—and their high-ranking officers—Generosity, Morality, Patience, Energy, and Concentration.)



King of Miao-zhan: (announcing in a loud voice)
 The buddhas of the ten directions past, present, and future,
 Endowed with supernormal powers manifesting this marvelous occurrence;
 Seeing me one sees Prabhutaratna,
 Like the wind in space completely unobstructed.

(In the forest, swaying in a beam of light, appear Uncle Juniper, Old Pine,
 the Sunflower, the Forget-me-not, and the Mimosa)

Uncle Juniper and Old Pine: Hurry up! The clouds and welcome rain are
 coming in response to our supplications. Let's get ready to express our
 gratitude

(As the mist disperses, after rubbing their eyes, opening them, and looking
 around, the children discover both the King of Miao-zhan and Ranghe seated
 on the golden lotus.)

Candraprabha: What's going on?

Child A: Wow, it's Father.

Child B: But didn't Father die in the Kingdom of the Master of Medicine?

Child C: Wow, we must be hallucinating

(Still seated on the lotus, Ranghe beams with wisdom and compassion.)

Ranghe: Children! It's not a dream. In spite of everything, I would never just
 abandon you. But due to your obstinate refusal to take the antidote, I left and
 led you to believe that I had died. But now that you have taken the antidote

and fully recovered your senses, I've come back to see you!

(With mixed feelings of grief and elation, the children rush up to Ranghe; as they bow to him and embrace him, he lovingly strokes their heads.

Standing off to one side, Candraprabha, the Vagrant, and the Scion are moved to tears. Recalling their own experience as prodigal sons and clearly understanding the reasons for why they suffered so much, they spontaneously drop to their knees and make full prostrations; the children do the same, remaining prostrate for a long while.

Majestic music fills the sky; each of the three are illuminated by a beam of light; the rest of the stage gradually darkens.)

△ Vulture Peak Assembly

(As the three slowly stand up in the gradually brightening morning sun, they see the legendary Vulture Peak Assembly right before their very eyes. In that most exalted assembly are gods and men, saints, and ordinary people, all joyfully listening to the wonderful Dharma. Seated in a mandala formation in the middle of the assembly are:

Sarvajna (east)

The Chief of Jewel Tree Village (south)

The King of Miaozhan (center)

The Grandee of Sarathi (north)

Ranghe the Medicine King (west)

Each one holds up the white lotus flower of the wonderful Dharma and illuminates 18,000 world systems to the east)



Five Buddhas: (singing in unison)
 Ever since I attained buddhahood so many aeons ago,
 Immeasurable incalculable,
 I've taught the Dharma to innumerable sentient beings,
 Setting them on the path of awakening numberless aeons.
 For the benefit of the masses I made it seem as though I entered into final
 nirvana;
 Yet I have not really gone to extinction I am still here teaching the Dharma;
 I'm ever here employing all manner of miraculous powers,
 To guide misguided sentient beings although I'm near, they see me not;
 Thinking that I've gone to extinction people make abundant offerings to
 my relics,
 Filled with affection admiring from a distance;
 Faithful and pious upright and docile,
 Wholeheartedly yearning to see the Buddha placing little value on their
 own lives;
 At times, together with the Sangha I appear on Vulture Peak,
 Revealing to all that I am here, not extinct;
 Using my skillful means I appear to have died, yet I have not;
 In all places where there are people who have faith in and honor me,
 That's where I teach the supreme Dharma;
 Yet some know this not believing that I've gone to extinction.
 Seeing them sunk in suffering,
 To them I remain hidden so that yearning is born in them;
 Such are my miraculous powers that over incalculable aeons,
 I am ever on top of Vulture Peak and wherever else the pious dwell;
 At the end of the aeon when all is consumed by fire,

This place remains a refuge thronged with gods and men.

Gods, men, saints, and all sentient beings: (chorus)

The body of the Buddha fills the Dharmadhatu universally manifesting to all in the world;

Following conditions, reaching everywhere yet ever seated on the throne of enlightenment.

Past buddhas have sat on this lotus platform conveying their essential teaching in the Vulture Peak Assembly;

Presenting seven parables so that the many folk will thereby see the Tathagata.

Easier to enumerate all the thoughts in the world to drink dry the great sea;
To measure space, to arrest the wind than to speak out all the excellent qualities of the Buddha.

(A huge lotus bud appears in the sky; after slowly opening and revealing its white petals, innumerable rays of light of all colors shoot out; then thick clouds of pollen shoot out of its stamens and airily float about.

When the lotus is fully open, the crisp sound of a chime rises up; the stage slowly darkens; the curtain closes.

In the darkness, the pollen continues to float about, glimmering like stars.)

— Curtain closes —

The end



*

“Si — si — ” At midnight, Abo dreams of a kite soaring in the vault of heaven.

“Si — si — ” The Foundling sports a soaring countenance.

“Yi — yao.” Abo hears the Foundling’s bright voice reverberating and whirling through the night like a jade flute.

“I hear it, I finally hear it!” rejoices Abo, clearly hearing for the first time the harmonious sound produced by the Foundling’s arrow-straight body as he rides the wind, a wonderful musical tone which graciously whirls through space, just like his soaring body.

The bright, flute-like sound resonates through the highland meadow filled with sleepy flowers, and dips down into the pine-filled valley, creating a symphony with the tree vines. Like the dance of the wild goose, the feathery glow of the heavenly bodies glimmers in the elegant flow of the Milky Way. Like the graceful, fragrant clouds floating up. Like the roc spreading its wings and soaring up to the highest heavens. Like the dew-laden rice tassels, lightly bowing their heads, producing a splendid musical sound with the wind and clouds, then dropping their miraculous seeds to the ground. Like the brilliant golden sand skillfully carved by the wind, sending out its beautiful sound throughout space

Flying at night, due to the varying trajectory and wind dynamics, at each turn there is an unexpected wonderful sound, in inexhaustible profusion. Each and every sound wave has its own voice, like the language of all things in heaven and on earth; as eternal as the sound of the ocean waves

Yi — yao.” Abo hears the low and lazy sound of that ancient jade flute

floating through the universe.

As the sun sets on the broad meadow, the Foundling sings out high in the firmament.

As it turns out, Abo's most ingenious creation is a jade flute.

Over the course of the past seven nights, the Foundling has steadily honed his perceptiveness and sensitivity. Abo has attached this old jade flute to the Foundling; brushed by the wind, it produces an exquisite sound which penetrates straight to the heart. To make up for the additional weight, Abo fits the Foundling with a new sail which blazes bright in the early morning sun, producing a nimbus rather like a heavenly body; in the silence of night, he takes on the appearance of a celestial butterfly amidst the glittering stars. Henceforth, the Foundling has no fear of the rain or wind. As the Foundling freely flies over the mountains and rivers without end, in the space between heaven and earth, wonderful music is heard, and amazing colors are seen!

The Foundling was once an ordinary paper kite beholden to the wind; but now he has mastered the force of the wind, using it to soar and sound at will; now he is a true kite indeed!

"Abo, I'll always remember you!" says the touchingly forthright Foundling.

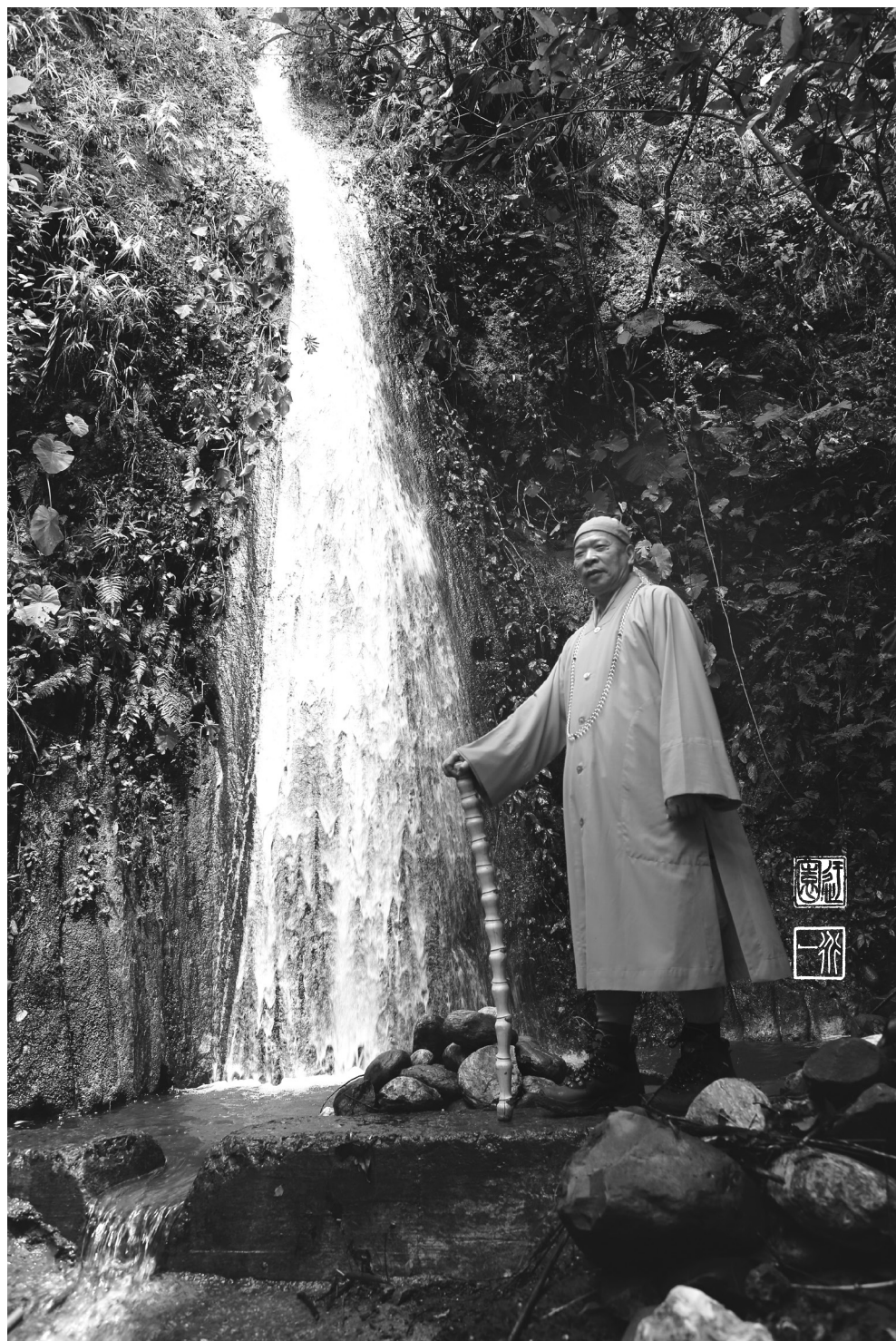
"Foundling, you are my eternal bosom friend!" says Abo, smiling upon the fiery sail he himself has sewn, as its cicada-like wings reflect the lovely golden rays of the setting sun.

In this way, like a shooting star, the Foundling soars high above the Green Bamboo Cliff —

On every silent night, Abo hears the Foundling singing at the center of the universe.



An airborne kite transforms the wind into the most beautiful sound in the glimmering Milky Way.



道一方丈於造福秘境・和南時瀑。



- 1951 Born on the 15th day of the 1st month of the lunar calendar into a peasant family from Tingbu Village in Fangyuan Township, Changhua County.
- 1973 In the first month of the Lunar Year, Master Chuan Ching (傳慶老和尚) went to Keelung harbor to personally bring him to the Vandana Monastery in Hualien on the East Coast of Taiwan.
- 1974 Underwent the ceremony of converting to Buddhism under Master Chuan Kuan (傳寬法師) and accepted the religious name Dao Hung (道弘).
- 1974 Accompanied Master Chuan Ching several times to call on the Venerable Master Kuang Chin (廣欽上人).
- 1976 Paid three visits to Master Dao An (道安法師) in the Sungshan Temple in Taipei. Also visited Master Yin Shun (印順法師), Master Hui Yue (慧嶽法師), Mr. Lei Yuting (Master Xian Ming 顯明和尚) and other senior Buddhist masters.
- 1977-1983 Extensively studied the Buddhist cannon in the Vandana Monastery's depositary of Buddhist texts.
- 1981 Lectured on the *Surangama Sutra* in the Lecture Hall of the Sweet Dew, expounding the "Guanyin's ability to use wisdom to penetrate the nature of all things". The same year in Spring, Master Chuan Ching personally named him the monastery's "master of the knowledge".
- 1982 The Grand Ceremony of 'Opening the Eyes' of the Bounty Guanyin was held at the Vandana Monastery. The event was attended by the president of the Chinese Inner Studies Institute Master Hui Yue, president of the Fu Yan Buddhist Institute Master Zhen Hua (真華法師), mentor of the Shifang Conglin Colledge Master Xian Ming (顯明和尚), president of the Chung-Hwa Institute of Buddhist Studies

- in Taichung Master Sheng Yen (聖印法師), mentor of the Buddhist lectures for young university students Master Jing Kong (淨空法師), the patriarch of the Fo Guan Shan Buddha Memorial Centre in Kaohsiung County Master Hsing Yun (星雲法師) and others.
- 1986 With the aim of “passing on a clear and pure message throughout the boundless universe” initiated and supervised the production of the “Vandana Buddhism Multimedia Art Production Series”: “The Nether World Suite and Zen”, “Ksitigarbha”, “Light up Your Wisdom Lamp” and other multimedia productions combining Buddhism, literature, music, fine arts, photography and recorded media sound technologies. This series marked a new era of the contemporary Buddhist artistic literature, music and fine arts in Taiwan and elsewhere.
- 1988 *Nine-colored Deer* stage music album inspired by the life of Siddhartha was awarded the “Golden Tripod Award for Best Album” by the Government Information Office, Executive Yuan. The judges commented: “This album is a very creative piece of art, in which music and story are combined in a superb way. It not only educates but also possesses high entertainment value.”
- 1989 Music album *The Cloud Boy* inspired by the life of Siddhartha was awarded both the “Golden Tripod Award for Best Album” and “Golden Tripod Award for Best Music Producer” by Government Information Office. The judges remarked: “It is a superb combination of human voices and musical instruments containing religious wisdom. Solemnly dignified, the music is extremely touching.”
- In the same year, *The Nether World Suite and Zen* art multimedia DVD was nominated for the “Golden Video Award”.
- 1991 Produced *The Tathagata Saga* music album, whose composer Cai Jie-cheng was awarded the “Golden Tripod Award for Best Composer”



by the Government Information Office under the Executive Yuan. Comments by the judges: “The combination of human voices and instrument sounds is ingenious and the style is sublime. It contains profound religious philosophy and is extremely touching.”

- Produced the *New Collection of Stories for Elementary Pupils* music album, which was awarded the “Golden Tripod Award for Best Album”. The judges remarked: “The music is lively and vivacious. It inspires children’s imagination and contains tremendous educational meaning.”

1992 In July founded the quarterly magazine *Ekaika-rasa* and took up the post of chief editor. The magazine purports to “protect and support the eternal spring of Nature we rely on, and search for the most beautiful and dignified human beings”.

1993 The founder of the Vandana Monastery Master Chuan Ching permitted and performed his tonsure, upon which he accepted the religious name “Yu Garden Dao Yi” (迂園道一). Also gave lectures at the monastery on the *Heart Sutra*, *Diamond Sutra*, *Flower Garland Sutra*, *Lotus Sutra*, *Amitabha Sutra*, etc.

1994 Wrote his first novel *The Purple Gold-wrought Robe*. Using simple and earnest word images, the novel radiates childhood joy and innocence and records a joyous path towards eternal truth. By deploying a highly ingenious writing technique, this allegorical novel uses the circle of the four seasons (spring rejuvenation, summer prosperity, autumn harvest, and winter storage) to reflect the circle of human life (birth, growth, mellowness, and a consummate life).

1996 Composed a New Year’s couplet: “Vandana at leisure, welcoming the New Year of Bounty.” At the beginning of the same year also paid his first visit to Master Sheng Yen (聖嚴大師) in the Nung Chan Temple

in Beitou.

- In October, *Prabhutaratna*, his novel inspired by Bhaisajyaguru, the Buddha of Medicine, was awarded the “Golden Tripod Award for Creative Literature Publication” by the Government Information Office under the Executive Yuan. Comments by the judges: “With a fairytale tone, the author tells a beautiful story of eternally seeking the ideal world. He portrays vividly every aspect of human spiritual realms and conveys the purport that ‘truth and beauty coexist’.”

- In July, “multimedia fairytale *Nine-colored Deer*”, beautiful and touching performance of “Summer · Taipei · Forest Legend” was staged at National Sun Yat-sen Memorial Hall in Taipei. It attracted an audience of ten thousand children and the whole event was as spectacular as its opening night six years earlier (1990).

1997 Organized the “Lotus Ksamayati ” religious assembly and lectured on *The Amitayurdhyana Sutra*. In the same year also paid his second visit to Master Yin Shun in his residence in the Taiping Township, Taichung County.

- Composed his third novel *Amrta*. Employing the writing technique of juxtaposing dreamland and reality, spiritual world and materialistic realm, the book gives an account of the extremely esteemed, magnificent and clean substance of the universe.

- Multimedia Buddhist art performance *Cloud Boy* was staged in the National Theatre in Taipei.

1998 Paid another visit to Master Hsing Yun at the Fo Guan Shan Buddha Memorial Centre in Kaohsiung.

- Wrote his fourth novel *Dhjava*; this life journey account of sauntering in Nature and exploring the soul tells the story that humankind, in the abstruse space-time journey, will eventually return



to the ultimate abode full of brightness and fragrance.

1999 Wrote a drama-novel *17 · 23 Seven Nights Waiting*. With the intertwining of stories that occur over seven days and seven nights, this book discloses the mystery of the revolving and never-ending universe and the spirituality of life's entirety.

- Organized the “17 · 23 Seven Nights Waiting” religious assembly, worshipping “The Universal Gateway Of Guanyin Bodhisattva”.
- Organized the “Buddhist Arts Camp for Youth” combining literature, music, fine arts, study of Buddhism, meditation, etc.
- “The Moonlight Ancient Mirror,” “The Glorious Lotus,” “The Song of Glory,” and “The Dreamlike Ocean” – four poems from the music album *The Purple Gold-wrought Robe* received four Golden Melody Award Nominations for “Best Lyricist” in the category Traditional and Artistic Works with “The Dreamlike Ocean” subsequently winning the prize.

2000 Composed a New Year's couplet: “Vandana Treasure Temple A Round Full Moon Overhead; Incense Lamp of Bounty Flower Garland Path to Enlightenment.”

- Lyrics of the song “Scarlet Dusk” from the music album *Dhvaja* were awarded the “Golden Tripod Award for Best Lyricist” in the category of Traditional and Artistic Works by the Government Information Office.
- At the same time, the album *Dhvaja* was nominated for the “Golden Melody Award for Best Album” in the category of Classical Music and the Ancient Heptachord Divertimento *Prabhutaratna* and the music album *Herding the Mind* were both nominated for the “Golden Melody Award for Best Album” in the category of Religious Music.
- Wrote and published a collection of six short stories *The Heavenly*

Drop with the Essence of the Universe, in which he discusses the wisdom light of the soul.

2001 For the first time lead the disciples of the Vandana Monastery to organize the “Spring’s Flower Garland” assembly, during which the monastery was closed for 137 days for daily prayers and meditations. Also gave lectures on the Flower Garland Sutra. This event was then repeatedly organized for many years.

- Asked the famous master Wang Beiyue to carve the couplet on the columns of the Main Gate to the Monastery: “Tathagata, Perfect in Enlightenment, Perfect in Knowledge and Behavior The Buddha of Medicine, Bodhisattva, Enlightened Being Leading All Sentient Being to Enlightenment.”

- Received the “Medal of Chinese Literature and Arts for Poetry Writing” by the Chinese Writers’ and Artists’ Association and “The Honorary Prize of the Epoch Quarterly’s 50th Anniversary” and was nominated for many other important Taiwanese awards.

- Published the poetry collection *Ekaika-rasa*, conveying the message that the instantaneous images in the universe are rich in everlasting rhythms of life. Also translated its title into Sanskrit as *Alaya & Mano-vijnana* (two kinds of consciousness).

- The music album *The Golden Drum*, whose production he supervised and which he produced, received the “Golden Melody Award” nomination for Best Album in the category of Religious Music.

2002 Composed a New Year’s couplet: “Rising sun illuminates the top of the Hungming Mountain worshipping the Great Flower Garland
Ascending moon lightens the Vandana Monastery preaching the Sublime Dharma of the White Lotus.”



- Took the disciples from the Vandana Monastery to visit the Qilan Mountain Village, where he lectured on the *Diamond Sutra*.
 - The music album *The Sea of Music Sounds · The Light of the Secular World* was nominated for the “Golden Melody Award for Best Album” in the category of Religious Music.
- 2003 Composed a New Year’s couplet: “The land of felicity possesses sevenfold treasure grounds for cultivating the flowers of enlightenment the disciples of the Vandana Monastery plant the Buddha seeds under the silver candlelight of the fifth watch.”
- Produced a new edition of the chorus *Herding the Mind*; carried out cultural exchange with the president of the Hanazano University in Kyoto Zen Master Eshin Nishimura.
 - *Song of the Majestic Flower*, oratorio of verses, was staged at the National Concert Hall in Taipei.
- 2004 Founded the “Crane Summit 21st International Forum” in memory of the spiritual mentor and founder of the Vandana Monastery, the Venerable Master Chuan Ching, leading the disciples of the Vandana Monastery to use the Vandana Buddhist Art to spread the Eastern Buddhism internationally. Using art and culture to connect with world and cultures, “Crane Summit” is a religious, musical, poetry and academic forum of the New Century built on the principles of the global village and Weltanschauung.
- Chinese, Japanese and Korean orchestras jointly performed the commemorative concert “Dhjava” in memory of Master Chuan Ching in the capital city of Seoul, Korea. The Patriarch of the Jogye Order of Korean Buddhism and former Korean President Mr. Lee Myung-bak both attended the performance.
 - Published *109.5° Prasrabdhi - 111 Long Scrolled Manuscript Verses*

Series. Completed on the 14th of August, 2003, the series covers eleven directions (east, south, west, north, center, the firmament, the earth, northwest, southwest, northeast, southeast) and includes 111 scrolled poems that describe the sage, joyous and esoteric causes of the universe, which are demonstrative of the beauty and sublimity of life and replete with infinitely magical and resplendent but nonetheless tranquil and profound spaces of subtle thinking. The slight homesickness in the verses leads readers to arrive at the azure sea in the universe and return to the everlasting, fragrant and pure realm of pollen and crystalline diamonds in humankind's souls.

- *Song of the Majestic Flower-Prelude* was awarded the “Golden Melody Award for Best Lyricist” in the category of Traditional and Artistic Works.
- Music album *The Beautiful Life of Siddhartha* receives a “Golden Melody Award” nomination for Best Album in the category of Religious Music.
- Piano suite *Prabhutaratna* was nominated for the “Golden Melody Award for Best Album” in the category of Classical Music.
- Zen oratorio *The White Horse Enters the Reed Catkins* – Untitled 48+1 – inspired by the famous “Kung-an” cases of Zen Buddhism teachings was staged in the National Theatre in Taipei.

2005 Composed a New Year's couplet: “The Bounty Guanyin of the Land of Felicity bestowing confidence without fear the disciples from the Vandana Monastery offer their countless blessings to benefit both Men and Heaven.”

- In August staged the performance of the English language version of the multi-media art production *Road* and received the most prestigious poetry award, Poet Laureate, from the World Academy of



Arts and Culture in Los Angeles, USA. The award was handed over by the president of the WAAC, Dr. Rosemary C. Wilkinson.

- Music album *The White Horse Enters the Reed Catkins* was nominated for the “Golden Melody Award for Best Album” in the category of Religious Music.

- Solo suite for flute, violin and cello: *Prabhutaratna* - “The Heaven of Ending Night” was nominated for the “Golden Melody Award for Best Album” in the category of Classical Music.

2006 Composed a New Year’s couplet: “Ten thousand rays of the rising sun illuminate the Hungming Mountain Bringing felicity, pointing towards the moon, the universal door revealing Guanyin.”

- On April 17th, “The 1st World Buddhist Forum” hosted the performance “Chinese Harmonious Music – large symphonic chorus of Buddhist prayer chants” at the Shanghai Oriental Art Center, performing the Zen poem *The White Horse Enters the Reed Catkins* by the Vandana Buddhist Art. The performance which combines Buddhism and music, Chinese and Western musical traditions as well as Buddhist chants with vocal music was subsequently staged in Shanghai, Canton, Shenzhen, Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia.

- At the invitation of the Venerable Chao-Hwei, “Prasrabdhi, the Poetry, Painting, Chanting, Music, and Multimedia of Vandana Buddhist Art” show was performed during the 6th conference of “The Theory and Practice of the Venerable Yin-Shun’s Teachings” at Hsuan Chuang University on May 21st, 2006.

- Erhu Suite *Prabhutaratna* - “Tathagatagarbha’s Scroll” receives a “Golden Melody Award” nomination for Best Album in the category of Religious Music.

- Finished his 5th novel *A Special Herding of the Mind*. At almost 600,000 characters, this novel employs a brand-new writing style called the “Scrolls of Epic Novel” that combines poetry and prose in a superb way. The author uses a very delicate and profound method to delineate how humankind can return to the ultimate abode, full of brightness and fragrance, in a journey of transmigration.
 - On September 4th, met for the first time with the Mongolian President Dr. Nambar Enkhbayar in the capital city of Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia.
 - On September 5th, received the first place prize for poetry in “The Chinggis Khaan Poetry Festival” in Mongolia with the long epic “Chinggis Khaan — A Dragon in the City of Tengri’s Eternal Blue Sky” and was awarded a golden medal, certificate and a precious thoroughbred Mongolian horse.
 - On September 9th, received the “Honoured Medal for the 800th Anniversary of Great Mongolian State” from the President of Mongolia at the Opera House in Ulaanbaatar for his outstanding achievements in poetry.
 - On September 11th, met again with the Mongolian President Nambar Enkhbayar and conferred the “Crane Summit Supreme Honor Crown Medallion” upon him in the Presidential Residence – “The Ikh Tenger Palace”.
- 2007 On March 28th, met for the first time with the Indian President Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam in the Presidential Palace in New Delhi and conferred the “Crane Summit Supreme Honor Crown Medallion” upon him. President Kalam subsequently presented him with the poem “My Garden Smiles” which he wrote and dedicated to him to express his delight in meeting such a bosom friend from afar.



- On March 29th, called on Mr. Ramaswamy Venkataraman (1987-1992), who served as the 8th President of India and was then 97 years old.
 - In May presided over the annual meeting of the Chinese Writers' & Artists' Association and became its president.
 - Invited for his first visit to the offices of the government of the Tamil Nadu, where he called upon Mr. Surjit Singh Barnala. Also met with the chief minister of Tamil Nadu Mr. M. Karunandhi and conferred the "Crane Summit Arts and Culture Medallion" upon him.
 - On September 2nd, met with President Kalam for the 2nd time in Chennai, the capital city of Tamil Nadu, to jointly preside over the "World Congress of Poets". President Kalam gave a lecture, in which he praised his long scroll poem "The Road" saying: "When I see my friend Yu Hsi, in front of me, the poem what he wrote about Buddha on the great earth, comes to my mind. What powerful words: *The road the road unrolls the road a sunflower blooms to receive the illustrious visit the Buddha seed arises...* The magnificent mind of Yu Hsi (Master Dao Yi), is indeed a signing star in our galaxy."
 - Founded the "Holiday School for Indigenous Children" and "Sipabhijna Workshop for the Indigenous People of the Pacific".
 - On December 26th, the National Center for the Performing Arts in Beijing held its first performance of the Buddhist symphonic chorus, staging the Zen poem *The White Horse Enters the Reed Catkins* by the Vandana Buddhist Art.
- 2008 In March met for the first time with the founding President of the Slovak Republic Mr. Michael Kovac in the capital city of Bratislava, Slovak Republic. After a discussion on the development of Buddhism in Europe, Master Dao Yi conferred the "Crane Summit Arts and

Culture Medallion” upon Mr. Kovac.

- On April 3rd, received the “Jan Smrek Poetry Prize”, being the first oriental poet to receive this prize.
- On May 4th, presided over the “Grand Anniversary of the Chinese Writers’ & Artists’ Association” attended by more than 300 poets from all over the world.
- Paid his third visit to Master Sheng Yen. Subsequently nominated Master Sheng Yen for the “Honorary Medal of the Chinese Writers’ & Artists’ Association” for his lifetime contribution to culture and invited the President of the Republic of China Ma Ying-jeou to attend “The R.O.C. Literature and Arts Festival and Prize Giving Ceremony” to confer the award.
- On June 30th, received the “Honorary Doctorate” from the Mongolian University of Arts and Culture in Ulaanbaatar.
- On July 1st, held a one-man exhibition of original manuscripts: “The Ninth Dimension of Yu Hsi’s Creations—Azure and Mysterious Imprints on the Ocean” at the Mongolian Modern Art Gallery in Ulaanbaatar. Taiwanese Master Zhao Hui (昭慧法師) personally visited the exhibition grounds.
- In July led the disciples of the Vandana Monastery, president of the Taipei Philharmonic Choir Culture and Education Foundation Du Hei and the Taipei Philharmonic Orchestra and Choir – altogether more than 100 people to perform the Vandana Buddhist Art Zen poem *Circular World* at the National Academic Drama Theatre in Ulaanbaatar.
- In September met for the third time with President Enkhbayar in the Ikh Tenger Palace and then for the fourth time at the National Academic Drama Theatre to jointly attend the performance of the



Circular World. Representative of the Republic of China in Mongolia Mr. Liu Chih-kung and his wife were also present.

- On October 21st, visited President Enkhbayar in the Presidential Palace and received the prestigious “Nairamdal Medal” from him.
- On December 12th, conferred the “Crane Summit International Poetry Crown Medallion” upon the Slovakian Poet Laureate Milan Rufus in the capital city of Bratislava, Slovak Republic, and met again with President Michael Kovac at the Carlton Hotel.

2009 In February wrote a courtly scroll entitled “A True Monk of Heaven and Earth” dedicated to Master Sheng Yen.

- On June 2nd, the Zen musical *Resplendent Moonlight* staged its world premiere at the National Concert Hall.
- In September received the “Hungarian PEN Club Memorial Medal” as the first oriental poet to be awarded this prize. Visited the Hungarian Parliament in Budapest, the capital city of Hungary, where he met with the Speaker of the National Assembly Madam Katilin Szili and presented her with the calligraphic scroll of the long poem “The Road”.
- Also in September, Dr. Istvan Hiller, Hungary’s Minister of Education and Culture, conferred the “Parnassus International Poetry Award” upon him.
- In October received the “Czech PEN Club Silver Memorial Medal” in Prague.
- On October 3rd, met for the third time with the Slovak President Michael Kovac and invited him to accompany him to Prague to jointly attend the welcoming reception held by the former Czech President Mr. Vaclav Havel.
- On October 5th, met for the first time with the “Philosophical

President” Vaclav Havel and during the reception party hosted by him awarded him with the “Crane Summit Supreme Honor Crown Medallion”. Also present was the representative of the Republic of China in the Czech Republic Mr. Liu Chih-kung.

2010 On May 4th, organized the “Grand Celebration of the 60th Anniversary of the Chinese Writers’ & Artists’ Association” and the “The R.O.C. Literature and Arts Festival and Prize Giving Ceremony”. Asked Zhang Mo, Xin Yu, Lu Jiao and other senior members among the Taiwanese poets to compile *The Memoir of the 60 Years of the Chinese Writers’ & Artists’ Association*, chronicling the artistic works and development of the Taiwanese literary circles as well as the history of the association. The prizes were awarded by the former chairman of the Council for Cultural Affairs (Ministry of Culture) Madam Lin Chengzhi, attesting to the spirit and heritage of the Literature and Arts Festival. The event was attended by many presidents of the writers’ associations and centers of the International PEN Club all over the world as well as poets and academics from both Taiwan and abroad (Norway, Czech Republic, Slovak Republic, Hungary, France, Belgium, Israel, Korea, Mongolia, India, Beijing, etc.). Also invited were the members from the “China Federation of Literary and Art Circles”. President Ma Ying-jeou sent congratulatory telegram and flowers.

- On May 6th, together with the National Central Library co-organized the “2010 Crane Summit International Poetry Forum” with the main topic “New Century, Pure Heart” and invited important representatives of the European and Asian literary circles to attend this grand literary event. During the Forum, Master Dao Yi conferred the “Crane Summit Arts and Culture Medallion” upon Mr. Dan Zeng



(the vice chairman of the “China Federation of Literary and Art Circles” & the former deputy-secretary of the provincial committee of the Yunnan Province) and Mr. Jiri Dedeczek (president of the Czech Centre of the International PEN Club, famous poet and singer as well as one of the signatories of the “Charter 77”).

- Mid-May: at the invitation of the “Missile Man of India”, the “People’s President” Dr. Abdul Kalam visited the capital city of India New Delhi, BrahMos Aerospace Center, President Kalam’s residence, etc.; in the evening hours accompanied Dr. Kalam on a flight to Chennai.
- In the morning hours of May 19th, President Kalam hosted the “Welcoming reception in honor of Taiwanese poet Dr. Yu His (Master Dao Yi)” held at the Chennai University and presented him with a statue of golden Buddha and a poem “Oceans Meet” symbolizing their mutual friendship. During the reception President Kalam also gave him a copy of an ancient Indian classic Thirukkural and asked him to translate it into Chinese. Consisting of 1330 couplets or Kurals representing the most exquisite of the Tamil poetry from 2200 years ago, the book contains the changeless maxims of ancient wisdom.
- On July 2nd, invited the founding President of Mongolia Mr. Punsalmaagiin Ochirbat and former Mongolian Minister of Foreign Affairs Madam Sanjaasuren Oyun to come to Taiwan to attend the Opening Ceremony of the “Mysterious Ocean Symbol – Arts Exhibition of Sculptures from Mongolian Buddhist Scriptures” co-organized with the National Central Library. It was the first exhibition of Mongolian Buddhist Art ever held in Taiwan. The ceremony was also attended by the Deputy-Minister of Foreign Affairs Mr. Javier Ching-Shan Hou, Chairman of the Mongolian and Tibetan

Affairs Commission Mr. Kao Su-po as well as representatives of many foreign countries in Taiwan including Russia, Italy, Hungary, Czech Republic, Korea, Israel, Honduras, Argentina, India, Jordan, Malaysia, Palau, etc. Subsequently Master Dao Yi awarded the “Crane Summit Arts and Culture Medallion” upon President Ochirbat at the Vandana Monastery.

- In July, acting in the name of Master Dao Yi, the Korean representative in the Republic of China conferred the “Crane Summit International Poetry Crown Medallion” upon famous Korean poet and sinologist professor Hsu Shi-hsu in the capital city of Seoul, Korea.
- On December 1st, invited the 13th President of India Dr. Abdul Kalam to visit Taiwan. At that time more than 70 years had passed since the famous Indian poet and philosopher Rabindranath Tagore visited the Republic of China. Master Dao Yi received the poem “Oceans Meet” from Dr. Kalam and joined him in prayer for the world’s peace and prosperity. Master Dao Yi also accompanied President Kalam during his visit at the Presidential Palace to call on President Ma Ying-jeou and during his visit to the Taipei Confucius Temple together with Mayor Hau Long-bin. President Kalam, known as the “Missile Man of India” or the “People’s President”, stayed in Taiwan for four days and three nights and during his visit gave many important lectures upholding the loving heart and peace. His endeavors to promote peace and prosperity have always been truly rare and commendable. During their visit to the Confucius Temple, President Kalam asserted that he and poet Yu Hsi (Master Dao Yi) would write a book together entitled *The Oceans Meet*. Implying that the Indian culture and Chinese civilization share many subtle similarities, the book emphasizes the value of morality, magnificence



of humanity and the need to pursue peace.

- In the evening held the performance of the Zen oratorio “The Road”, whose music was composed by the Chinese composer Tang Jianping. This multi-faceted oratorio transgressing traditional boundaries is a beautiful dulcet song praising life and is alternately sung in Chinese, English and Sanskrit languages.

- On December 18th, organized the “The Second Taiwan Cross-Strait cum Hong Kong and Macao Arts Forum” in Taipei. The chairman of the China Federation of Literary and Art Circles Mr. Sun Jiazheng arrived accompanied by a delegation of almost 100 academics and artists from China, Hong Kong and Macao to participate in this impressive event.

- As part of the forum also organized the “Peking and Kunqu Opera Exchange Concert” and a photography exhibition entitled “World Heritage – China” and accompanied the attendees to visit the Palace Museum in Taipei, Taipei National University of the Arts, Preaching Grounds of the Tzu Chi Foundation in Hualien, Chung Tai Monastery in Taichung, Fo Guan Shan Buddha Memorial Centre in Kaohsiung, etc. The delegation also met with Master Wei Jue (惟覺老和尚), Master Cheng Yen (證嚴上人) and many politician including Lien Chan, Lin Chen-chi, Hau Long-bin, Chiang Pin-kung, Liu Chao-shiuan, Jason Hu, Emile Chih-jen Sheng, Chao Shao-kang, Sisy Wen-hsien Chen and others. At the airport before leaving Taiwan Mr. Sun Jiazheng and Master Dao Yi both composed a poem and exchanged them as presents.

2011 Composed a New Year’s couplet: “Ren – joyful celebration of abundance and prosperity Chen – dragon keeps out clouds and thunder bringing timely wind and rain.”

- In March organized the “Spring’s Lotus” religious assembly and lectured on the 28 chapters of the *Lotus Sutra* in the Main Hall of the Vandana Monastery.
- On May 4th, the “Grand Celebration in memory of the May Fourth Movement held in the year of the 100th Anniversary of the Republic of China” opened in the National Central Library together with the awarding ceremony of the “52th Medal of Literature and Arts”. Master Dao Yi personally invited the Chairman of the Council for Cultural Affairs Madam Shen Xue-Yong to confer the “Honorary Medal of the Chinese Writers’ & Artists’ Association” upon Kuo Chih-Yuan, Lee Yi-Hong, Kuan Yun-loong and other senior members of the artistic circles.
- On July 19th, upholding the idea of the “Poet’s Contribution to the World Peace and Prosperity” Master Dao Yi and President Kalam jointly announced the “100 Poems on Peace by 100 Poets” initiative and subsequently invited 100 poets from all over the world to compose poems on either “poet meets with the forest, stirring of the soul” or “world peace and prosperity” to celebrate the world peace and fraternal love. Opened the “Zen, Arts, Poetry, Dao” garden in the Land of Felicity at the Vandana Monastery and constructed the “Vairocana Plaza” and the “Bounty Guanyin Crane Summit Plaza”.
- In October met for the second first time with the “President Philosopher” Vaclav Havel in the Czech Republic and received an invitation to visit the “Dagmar and Vaclav Havel VIZE 97 Foundation”.
- On October 6th, the European Circle of Franz Kafka awarded him the “Medal of Franz Kafka for Literature” in the Franz Kafka Museum in honor of his outstanding accomplishments and influence



in the field of literature.

- At the same time received the Czech National PEN Club highest honor – the “Karel Čapek Medal” for his long scroll poem “Road” in recognition of his accomplishments in various fields of arts and culture.
- On October 8th, the founding President of the Slovak Republic Mr. Michael Kovac presented him with the “Ferdinand De Martinengo Golden Medal” for humanism in the capital city of Bratislava, Slovak Republic.

2012 In September conferred the “Crane Summit Arts and Culture Medallion” upon the 5th Israeli President, writer and journalist Mr. Yitzhak Navon. The award was handed over in Israel in the city of Kfar Saba by the vice-president of the Tainan National University of the Arts Mr. Cheng Te-yuan, who was acting in the name of Master Dao Yi.

- Received the “Golden Medallion of the Union Hispanomundial De Escritores for Literature and Peace”.
- In the same year, as part of the “Crane Summit 21st Century International Poetry Forum” organized the first stage of the “100 Poems on Peace by 100 Poets”, initiating what will eventually become the “Peace and Love Garden of Poems by 100 Poets” at the Vandana Monastery.
- Composed a long poem entitled “The Beyond” describing the beautiful countryside along the East Coast of Taiwan as well as the gentleness and purity of the local climate and people. Together with President Kalam co-authored the *Oceans Meet: Glad Tidings of Poetic Life*. The book brings out the waves of poetic minds, literary thoughts, dreams and purity of life of two friends across oceans.

Oceans Meet presents how we can evolve a peaceful, happy and society of ethics leading to global happiness and prosperity, for which the youth of the world will be the greatest intellectual resource on the earth, above the earth and under the earth.

- On November 14th, lead the poets to personally plant the “trees of peace” at the Vandana Monastery’s “Vairocana Plaza” and to recite poetry. Representing the former Indian President Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, the representative of India in the R.O.C. Mr. Pradeep Kumar Rawat planted a precious 60-year old “Elephant’s Foot” (*Beaucarnea recurvata*).

- On November 17th, invited the president of the Buddhist Association of the Republic of China Venerable Master Yuan Zong to preside over the Celebrations of the 45th Anniversary of the Founding of the Vandana Monastery and the 30th Anniversary of the Unveiling of the Bounty Guanyin statue, which coincided with the annual pilgrimage to the Monastery and the Grand Ceremony of “Opening the Eyes” of the three Bronze Buddha Statues in the Main Hall. Disciples and believers from all around Taiwan gathered in crowds to attend this exceptionally grand occasion.

- On December 5th, called on Master Hsing Yun and presented him with a long scroll poem “A True Monk of Heaven and Earth”.

2013 On March 1st, set the direction for the Vandana Monastery disciples to follow in his *Burst of Waves on a Momentary Sea*, putting into words the teachings and legacy of Master Chuan Ching.

- In May gave lectures on the Lotus Sutra in the Main Hall.

- On May 17th, at the invitation of the representative of India in Taiwan dined together with him in his residence and discussed the developments of the Chinese and Indian Buddhism. On June 23rd



presided over the graduation ceremony of the 6th class of students attending the “Holiday School for Indigenous Children”.

- From June to September lectured on the Flower Garland Sutra in the Main Hall.
- On July 27th, the president of the Buddhist Association of the Republic of China Master Jie Yun (界雲法師) lead a group of young university students to visit the Vandana Monastery.
- On August 28th, a grand performance of the Zen poem *A True Monk of Heaven and Earth* was held at the Great Enlightenment Auditorium of the Fo Guan Shan Buddha Memorial Centre in Kaohsiung. Featuring a 200-member orchestra and a choir, this new experience of religious arts was attended by more than 2000 spectators.
- On October 22nd, received the “Malaysian Ipoh City Friendship Award” from Dr. Zambry Abdul Kadir, Chief Minister of the Malaysian State of Perak.
- On December 25th, under the auspices of the Ministry of Culture, the National Taiwan Symphonic Orchestra (NTSO) performed the grand Buddhist symphony *Sasta Devamanusyanam*, the greatest oriental Buddhist religious music composed for the western symphonic orchestra in the Chinese history so far. The performance was supplemented by a projection of the multimedia art production *Life of Sakyamuni* – more than 1000 slides of multimedia painting scrolls were used to depict the legend of the life of Sakyamuni Buddha. Combining poetry, fine arts and drama, the grand opening night of the “Multimedia Arts Production *Sasta Devamanusyanam*” was an unprecedented cultural event and experience!

2014 On January 1st, organized the “New Year’s Pilgrimage” giving his blessings to numerous disciples and believers during his enlightening

address. More than 200 disciples from Hualien gathered at the Vandana Monastery to greet the sunrise and bow before the Bounty Guanyin.

- In January published the book *Awakening Arrives* expounding the practice of the “Burst of Waves on a Momentary See”, the core of the teachings followed at the Vandana Monastery.
- On January 4th, became the president of the Taiwan Tamil Sangam founded on that day by the Indian people living in Taiwan. Also started the webpages and the magazine of the Taiwan Tamil Sangam.
- On January 15th, received the “2014 Thiruvalluvar Award” as first foreign academic to ever receive the award. The grand awarding ceremony happened to coincide with the Tamil harvest festival “Thai Pongal” and the “New Year’s Celebrations” and took place at 4 pm in the capital city of Tamil Nadu Chennai in the Government Museum Auditorium. Master Dao Yi received a certificate personally signed by the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu Madam J. Jayalalitha, a golden medal with engraved image of Thiruvalluvar as well as a cheque for 100.000 rupees from the Government of Tamil Nadu, etc.
- On January 14th, under the motto “Children of the Mountains and Seas, the Original Code of Humankind; Inhabitants of the Earth, Good and Honest Pure Heart” took 32 students from the “Holiday School for Indigenous Children” on an educational excursion to the Ministry of Justice for a “Luncheon Meeting” with the Minister of Justice Madam Luo Ying-shay. Minister Luo encouraged the students “to listen and learn more, to study diligently and take a broad view of things encompassing the whole world”. Madam Luo also presented Master Dao Yi, founder of the school, with a ruyi scepter in the shape of a dragon’s head. Master Dao Yi reciprocated by presenting Madam



Luo with the scroll poem “Burst of Waves on a Momentary See”.

- On February 5th, held the opening night of the music concert *Awakening Arrives* at the Vandana Monastery. Composed in memory of the founding Master Chuan Ching, who in 1967 came to Hualien on the East Coast of Taiwan and started the arduous work to build the Monastery, this original music performance represents an exquisite combination of religion and arts to be appreciated by people worldwide. The performance was attended by the Czech representative in Taiwan Mr. Koudelka and his wife, Slovak representative in Taiwan Mr. Kovac and his wife, Mongolian representative in Taiwan Mr. Samdan, music composer Chien Nan-chang and his wife, the president of the Taipei Philharmonic Choir Culture and Education Foundation Professor Du Hei and other honorary guests.
- On March 16th, in memory of the (Aisin Gioro) Yu-Yun, a great master of the traditional Chinese learning and sinology, his disciples founded the “Fongyuan Association”; the members of the association subsequently presented Master Dao Yi with a calligraphy praising his poetry and erudition. The present was handed over to Master Dao Yi by the president of the Fongyuan Association Mr. Hong Hsu during the “Master Yu’s Commemorative Meeting” organized in the premises of the Crane Summit 21st Century International Forum.

