

# A Journey to the East

*A historical and poetical fairytale adventure styled after A Journey to the West, by  
Ming Dynasty Writer Wu Cheng'en.*



## Chapter I: Monkey World

Once upon a time, the Monkey King sat on the summit of Flower-Fruit Mountain, meditating. This was the monkey-man who was spoken of in legends of the Middle Kingdom both as a mighty warrior and a pilgrimaging Buddhist. He was now happily retired after reaching Enlightenment. He had shed the yellow suit and tiger skin he once famously wore and instead donned a monk's flowing robe. But that was his body anyway, for his spirit sailed even further out into the Universe to the heights of his Monkey World and beyond.

The scene was recorded by a wandering poet who wrote:

The crowds of clouds hung round,  
No sight of valley found  
As on the peak he sat  
Upon a flowery mat,  
Transcending form and space,  
The stars became his face,  
His eyes were galaxies,  
His thoughts eternities;  
They slowed and slowed and slowed  
Though mountain springs still flowed.  
He reached to realms where Time  
Could scarcely bear to climb.  
A year became a moment;  
A lifetime but a minute  
As human empires rose  
And quickly were deposed,  
As war and peace elapsed  
Midst founding and collapse,  
He sat above them all  
On mists that never fall;  
He sat above ripe fruit,  
No need for their pursuit,  
He sat above the world  
Within a monk's robe furled,  
Where crane and phoenix flew  
Around and blossoms grew  
Where all was good and true.

As he sat there in perfect tranquility, the Monkey King took no notice of the various happenings of the summit of Flower-Fruit Mountain: the flitting of the grass, the crashing of the mountain streams and waterfalls, and the echoes of his monkey kin below. No, there was no reason at all for him to take note of the plopping sounds that had been going on for the better part of 10 minutes—which only accounted for a fraction of a fraction of a fraction of a second where his spirit soared.

Finally, as he sat there perfectly still, his face completely motionless, stressless, and utterly at one with the mountain, a banana came soaring directly into his monkey face where it

made direct contact with his nose and forehead and produced a loud “*thud*.” The Monkey King was suddenly drawn down from his celestial sailing, which took a moment, and, after a few more moments, he opened his eyes, still registering what had just taken place. Confused, he looked about and became aware of yelling from below.

“Master Monkey! Master Monkey!” cried a monkey elder who had been specially tasked with disrupting the sacred meditation of the Monkey King.

All became clear now. The Monkey King unfolded his hairy legs and rose from his seat. He walked off the cliff and descended as a kite might glide downward on a current of air, gently resting upon the ground.

“Well, what is it?” the Monkey King asked matter-of-factly.

“Master Monkey, the Goddess of Mercy has just been here and left some instructions for you,” the elder monkey said, handing the Monkey King a lapis lazuli bejeweled scroll case. “It seems she wants you to go to the Three Realms.”

“The Three Realms? Hmmm... Strange. Why doesn’t she just go there herself. Certainly she has more influence there than I,” The Monkey King said, scratching his chin. “This is very unusual.”

“Indeed, indeed it is, Master Monkey,” the monkey elder agreed.

The Monkey King had previously gotten himself into quite a bit of trouble tearing up the Three Realms and anyone who had stood in his way. It was only after Buddha Shakyamuni had stopped and imprisoned him, and he had redeemed himself by aiding the monk Xuanzang in retrieving scriptures from the West, that the Monkey King himself had achieved status as a Buddha and been granted the Monkey World, which included Flower-Fruit Mountain. Of course, that reckless behavior was all behind the Monkey King now, but still, sending him down to the Three Realms seemed a bit like trying to use the wrong tool for a job.

At any rate, the Monkey King unraveled the scroll and read:

“Dear Monkey Aware of Emptiness (Sun Wukong)” the Goddess of Mercy began, using his formal name. “We call on you once again for assistance in saving sentient beings. This time however, you are not imprisoned and we have no freedom to offer you, so we appeal to the ancient vow we once all made to The Creator—and which you may or may not remember,” indeed the Monkey King scratched his chin, “Ancient vow?” At any rate, he continued reading, “While you have been meditating blissfully on your own, great peril has confronted the Human Realm, the Three Realms, and All of the Universe. A great and unnamed Evil has crept into the Universe and created a countless number of perils and tribulations for the Righteous Law of The Creator. It has manifested as an evil red dragon within the Human Realm and is marked with a sickle and hammer. Buddha Shakyamuni, who himself was contacted, has now contacted me and I have contacted you in hopes that you can visit the Three Realms and have two worthy spirits sent down to assist in this urgent task. We ask only from you that you get the Jade Emperor’s Domain in the Three Realms in order once again, so that our request can be properly processed and the two worthy spirits sent down. Above all else, this mission must be completed and we must do everything in our power to save sentient beings who are in great peril now. Below you will find the details of the human being whose journey to the East must be assisted and his mission there accomplished.”

She ended with the usual closing showing gratitude and respect “Heshi,” and her formal name “Guanyin Pusa.”

The Monkey King, who since becoming a Buddha had become less prone to sporadically itching all over his body, now seemed to revert to this old habit, for he was completely perplexed

by this new mission and by what exactly the Goddess of Mercy meant by “get the Jade Emperor’s Domain in the Three Realms in order once again.”

“Get my staff,” he said to the monkey elder.

## **Chapter II: The Three Realms**

The Monkey King flew through the Universe, descending further and further until he came to the upper region of the Three Realms, above the Human Realm. This upper realm of the Three Realms was generally under the jurisdiction, or at least purview, of the Jade Emperor. From there, he made his way to the Jade Emperor’s palace, known as the Dragon Palace, where he was greeted by two buff guards standing head and shoulders above him. They were fully armored and mustached, had brilliant red capes, and held halberds that glistened magnificently.

When the Monkey King approached, the guards did not bow as he had expected, but one said, “Master Monkey, it is an honor to meet you. Unfortunately, we have been charged to stand here without moving for anyone, even a Buddha, so we cannot show you the proper respect.”

“I understand, Sir Guard,” said the Monkey King. “Please show me in to the Jade Emperor at once. I have urgent business given to me by the Goddess of Mercy herself, and I must see him immediately to discuss the matter.”

The guards did not budge.

The Monkey King looked at one guard’s face and then the other guard’s face. Neither showed any sign of acknowledgement and seemed to stare right past him.

“So you would not budge for a Buddha, you say?” the Monkey King asked.

No reply.

“Not the Goddess of Mercy herself? Not Buddha Shakyamuni himself? What about Laozi, the Old Master of Taoism? None of them?”

A guard replied, “Master Monkey, we do not mean any disrespect, but the gods in Heaven may easily be impersonated by a demon, so that lowly guards such as ourselves would not be able to tell the difference and the Jade Emperor and his palace could be easily compromised.”

“Lowly guards indeed!” the Monkey King thought, but said nothing. He merely raised his eyebrows. He was now able to control what used to be a very impulsive tongue and temperament. Sure enough, when the Monkey King took a moment to consider what the guards were saying it sounded perfectly reasonable and appropriate.

“A miraculous feat then?” the Monkey King smiled and said. “What would you like to see? I can summon a hundred replicas of myself, chop off my head and let it come back to me, or grow my staff to be so large that you cannot see its end.”

The guard sighed and said, “You just have to fill this out.”

The guard reached from inside his red cape and pulled out a scroll. He handed it to the Monkey King, who unrolled it and looked...

A maze of questions trapped the Monkey King  
They asked not just his name, but everything:  
Where was he born? Who were his references?  
Did he have any beverage preferences?  
What kind of meeting? One with just the staff?  
A quick exchange or hour and a half?

Had he prepared the proper court attire?  
Or made appropriate offerings in fire?  
Who was his lawyer in case it got messy?  
Had all requests been written out expressly?  
What was his father's name and place of birth  
Was he from Heaven or was he from Earth?  
How much? How long? How short? Where, when, and why?  
What name? What place? What date? Check all that apply.

Now, the Monkey King had battled every manner of creature, from vicious tigers, to sea monsters, to evil sorcerers, to demon kings, to celestial soldiers, and never had he encountered such a bewildering foe as this scroll that was covered in questions.

The guard motioned to a writing desk and chair nearby and the Monkey King, scratching himself more and more, sat down and started writing. His name and his request he wrote out in the plainest possible manner. The rest was a sloppy mess of "I don't know," "No, thank you," "Really?" and random scribbles on the edges when he lost his train of thought. One question asking about his educational qualifications he thought would best be answered by drawing the symbol of a Buddha, the swastika, and he decided that drawing a hundred of them would best answer the question, but soon abandoned this after a quarter of the scroll was filled and obstructed by the swastikas.

Eventually, the Monkey King handed it back to guard, who took a look. His eyes bulged at the insane looking mess. After regaining his disinterested demeanor, he said, "We shall pass on this request and, assuming it checks out, you should be granted a meeting with the Jade Emperor himself in three to five days."

"Sir Guard, three to five days?" the Monkey King asked, genuinely unsure if he had heard correctly.

"Yes, if you need to meet quicker, you will have to check the expedited processing box here," the guard said, awkwardly gripping his halberd in his elbow while he pointed. "Then it will be one to two days... but certainly not today. We do not offer same-day processing currently based on the volume of requests."

"Yes, of course," the Monkey King said, now thoroughly disappointed in the incompetence and lack of decorum of these guards. "If you will be so kind, please 'check' it then, will you, Sir Guard?"

The guard assented and the Monkey King turned to walk away from the palace when he heard the words in the Goddess of Mercy's message—"urgent task... above all else, this mission must be completed"—burning in his ears. His staff suddenly enlarged by two feet and his grip on it tightened intensely as he turned to face the guards.

### **Chapter III: The Jade Emperor's Dragon Palace**

For a brief moment, the Monkey King contemplated smashing the two guards with his staff and marching up to the Jade Emperor to carry out his mission. However, he quickly shook off this impulse and quietly walked into the gardens abutting the Jade Emperor's Dragon Palace.

Within the first garden he entered, the Monkey King came to the Pond of Eternal Reflections and stood upon a balustraded bridge overlooking it. A cherry blossom tree was

nestled alongside the pond and it seemed the perfect place to wait for his appointed meeting time in serene reflection. There he found a poem inscribed upon a plaque, which he read to himself:

Reflecting on the days gone by,  
Reflecting face within the water,  
Reflecting light upon a sigh,  
Reflecting on the pain and laughter,  
Reflecting on the scenes once done,  
Replaying right before the eyes,  
Reflecting battles that were won  
That flow on ripples as they rise.

In the middle of his reflecting, the Monkey King had his thoughts distracted when he heard yelling from the direction of the palace. The Monkey King attuned his ear, which had supernatural hearing, to the direction of the yelling and could make out someone yelling: “What do you mean, he cannot see me today? What sort of show are you running here?”

He made his way through the garden to where he heard the voice emanating. It took him to a palace wall, which he used his supernatural vision to peer through. He saw the court of the Dragon Palace. There was a line of people exasperatedly waiting for an audience with the Jade Emperor and, having pushed his way to the front of the line and arguing with a guard, was none other than the Monkey King’s old friend and fellow pilgrim to the West—Pigsy. He had one hand on his meaty hip and the other he was waving in the air indignantly.

“The Jade Emperor sends me a letter telling me I’m going to be arrested for violations of ‘temple building and sanitation ordinances,’ when it isn’t even his temple to begin with. Then I come here to talk some sense into him and you tell me that he can’t meet me for another five days. You people have gone crazy; you really have,” said Pigsy. “Don’t you know who I am?”

While Pigsy never made it to Buddhahood like the Monkey King, he did gain a certain amount of repute in those quarters of the Universe above the Human Realm. Pigsy began rolling up his sleeves and preparing to smash the guard into a million pieces. Seeing what was about to transpire, the Monkey King used another supernormal ability to quickly turn himself into a bee. He flew through a window, through a hallway, and into the court. He then appeared in the nick of time and laid his hand on the tightening fist of Pigsy.

Pigsy was stunned, “Well, if it isn’t old Sun Wukong himself! Do you know what these guards are trying to pull on me?”

“You should have requested expedited processing,” the Monkey King said, smiling.

“I did,” countered Pigsy. “Twice.”

“Well, before you do anything you might regret, let me have a look at this Jade Emperor. Clearly, there is something going on here,” said the Monkey King.

The Monkey King transformed himself back into a bee without the guards seeing and flew through the Dragon Palace until he came to the Jade Emperor’s office. He was sitting not at his Jade Throne but at a desk next to it. He was meeting with an attendant from the Royal Peach Orchard, who was filing a complaint about how a few of the peaches in the orchard were turning strangely rotten again. Rottenness would be no big deal down in the Human Realm, but even one rotten peach a little higher up in the Three Realms was considered bizarre and potentially disastrous.

The Jade Emperor was meticulously collecting the details, thumbing through volumes of ancient lore, and above all else, filling in dozens of scrolls, each covered in questions and numbers that looked very much like the scroll that had so stunned the Monkey King not that long ago. A giant pile of such scrolls filled half of his table, as well as an adjacent table, and littered every surface in the room. The Monkey King, in bee form, buzzed around the Jade Emperor's head and observed that his eyes looked withered and droopy, and the eyeballs themselves seemed to contain gray fog that clouded them such that they had lost all of their naturally brown color. In the middle of writing something, the Jade Emperor seemed to remember something that he had forgotten and, foraging for another scroll, he accidentally knocked down the giant pile of scrolls which rolled everywhere. He clumsily bent down and tried to restore the office to some semblance of order. A guard and an attendant both bent down and tried to help.

The Monkey King surmised that the Jade Emperor was possessed by some kind of demon that probably fed on documents full of meaningless writing when no one was looking. Something, he realized, must be done. He flew back to Pigsy, where he transformed back into himself.

“Well?!” said Pigsy.

The Monkey King was about to say something, but stopped himself. He took a moment to contemplate. He realized doing something now would probably set off a chain of events that he would never be able to reverse. His next move could very well determine the course of the rest of his soul's existence.

The Goddess of Mercy's words came flooding back to him: “We ask only from you that you get the Jade Emperor's Domain in the Three Realms in order once again... above all else, this mission must be completed.”

“Only from you...” the Monkey King repeated. “I suspect this is much more than ‘Only from you.’” He knew that once he used violence he could very well lose his status as a Buddha, and it was a slippery slope right down to the Human Realm, an unusual place in the Universe where one could not escape tremendous suffering and all-consuming delusion. From there, he might well find his way to the bottom realm of the Three Realms—the Underworld, also known as Hell or Hades. Thus, this simple task as a courier would be turned into a death sentence. These thoughts boiled in the Monkey King's mind.

A single moment frozen in the Universe  
Where everything once known feels threatened with reverse.  
The cogs and wheels of higher powers click and turn,  
Revealing something that before you couldn't discern.  
He turns and looks through palace walls where he can see  
A single leaf falls from the cherry blossom tree,  
As he must fall into the churning mortal sea.

A single glance and he knows now what must be done:  
All must be sacrificed in hopes the quest is won.  
The consequences hanging heavy like a peach  
That's fully ripe and, with the branch, quite soon will breach,  
And must be picked and eaten when the time is right;  
A single hand must save this peach from certain blight.  
It's on! The time is now for action's healthy bite!

By now, the guards had gathered together because of the ruckus previously made by Pigsy. To Pigsy's second "Well?!" The Monkey King slowly nodded his head in assent and darted his eyes at the guards, signaling to Pigsy to take note of them and prepare.

They approached the two main guards blocking entry to the inner office.

"Sir Guard, my mission is urgent and was handed to me by the Goddess of Mercy herself," said the Monkey King in an utterly serious tone. "We must see the Jade Emperor at once."

"You just have to fill out this—" before the guard could finish his statement, he was rocketed across the room into the wall by the Monkey King's staff, which jabbed with the force of a battering ram being carried by army of soldiers. The Monkey King's enormous staff then knocked out the second guard before he could even figure out what was happening. The other guards charged and Pigsy, at first emboldened, decided it was best to drop back and situate himself behind the Monkey King. He told himself that he would be much braver if he had his weapon of choice, his trusty rake, with him. The Monkey King, meanwhile, made his staff become even bigger and swung it around over his head, creating a dangerous, pulverizing whirlwind around him. The guards stopped, unsure what to do. They looked at each other. The boldest one ducked his head under the spinning staff and ran for the Monkey King, who immediately stopped swinging his staff in a circle and swatted the guard upward like flipping a pancake against the ceiling of the palace. The other guards took the Monkey King's distraction to their advantage and charged at him with their halberds outstretched. The Monkey King, however, was always aware of them. He dodged their attack and used his staff to vault into the air and knock out one guard with a picture-perfect flying kick. He then knocked the feet out from under two of them, and simply bashed his way through the last two.

The room cleared of opponents, the Monkey King straightened his monk's robe and proceeded to the office of the Jade Emperor. Pigsy followed on his heels, kicking weapons away from the vanquished guards. The two old friends found the Jade Emperor by himself, except for an attendant who was urging him to flee, something he couldn't conceive of with so many documents to still fill out.

Once there, Pigsy squealed, "Your Majesty! You look... you look... well, very busy."

Indeed, the Jade Emperor still had his writing brush in his hand and dozens of disheveled documents piled under the one he was working on.

"Oh no, who let you in here? I have many documents I still have to finish for the last visitor. Do you have the scroll with the proper document filled in? It appears not. Here, at the very least, you'll have to fill—" before the Jade Emperor could finish, the Monkey King turned over a metal chest full of scrolls, emptying it onto the floor, and put the empty chest against the Jade Emperor's desk.

"Oh, I think I know what you have in mind," Pigsy said. He used his giant, flabby arm to sweep across the entire desk of the Jade Emperor, pushing what he was working on as well as his piles of documents and rolled up scrolls into the chest, as well as the writing brush, ink, and other odds and ends. Quite pleased with himself, Pigsy then proceeded to use a pair of tongs from a nearby incense burner to lift a red-hot coal from the burner and drop it in the chest, which quickly started to spit out flames and create a roaring fire in no time.

The Jade Emperor, meanwhile, looked on in disbelief and horror, muttering, "No! What are doing?"



Pigsy proceeded to set his hands upon the various scrolls lying around the office, which he planned to use as kindling, when the Monkey King raised his hand to indicate that the fire did not need to be fed.

Seeing that the Jade Emperor was completely bewildered and shocked, and that the gray fog that was clouding his eyes was now rapidly dissipating, the Monkey King spoke, “Your Majesty, we apologize for the intrusion and regret the abrupt nature of our entrance and the commandeering of your personal items and public documents. Undoubtedly, you will see that we had every good intention in doing so, as the documents were standing in the way of more pressing matters that could adversely affect the Three Realms over which you reign.”

The tone of the Monkey King was so agreeable and civilized that the Jade Emperor seemed to regain some of his natural composure.

Seeing this, the Monkey King proceeded, “I was contacted by the Goddess of Mercy with an urgent mission. Please, read for yourself.”

The Jade Emperor, eager to get a document in his hands, opened the lapis lazuli bejeweled case and hurriedly unrolled the scroll he was handed. His face became determined and serious, and he stroked his long beard.

“Hmm... Yes.... ‘Some worthy spirits’...” He went to his shelf and pulled out a map labeled “The Human Realm.”

After a long silence, he jabbed his finger onto the map and said, “Here!”

“Where?” said Pigsy.

“In the West,” said the Jade Emperor. “Or the East, depending on which way you look at the map—anyway, it’s quite different from your last journey, Monkey King.”

The Monkey King took the area pointed to and looked at it from every direction, but it did not look like China or India, and he couldn’t find any Yellow River, Yangtze River, Himalayan Mountains, or Ganges River.

“America: The Beautiful Kingdom it says here,” the Jade Emperor said, reading the map closely. He went to his shelf and scanned it for a while until he located precisely the set of scrolls that he was looking for. He unrolled them and read, “There are many kinds of people in the Beautiful Kingdom, from very light-skinned White People to very dark-skinned Black People, and a wide variety of cultures and languages, etc. etc.”

He looked at the Goddess of Mercy’s message again and said, “What you need are some heroic spirits originally from this side of the world who can fit in and complete the mission.” He now furiously scanned and shuffled the scrolls. He had Pigsy retrieve a brush, ink, and blank scroll so that he could take notes and jot down names. The Monkey King and Pigsy, seeing this would take a while, helped themselves to some tea that they warmed up and some biscuits that were always well stocked in the Jade Emperor’s office.

Finally, the Jade Emperor said, “I have it! Or I have them, anyway: ‘two worthy spirits.’—the strongest and most heroic. And I have a good idea where you can find them. I have the names here and general outline of where you need to go and a few other tips. You may need to ask around when you get in the area, but I’m sure you’ll find the way.”

“Thank you, your Majesty,” the Monkey King said.

He continued, “Do be careful though. The Three Realms is not what it used to be.”

#### **Chapter IV: The Hills of the Three Sages of the West**

“Well, Master Monkey, I think this is where we go our separate ways again,” said Pigsy after piecing together what was going on. “That mission you have there in your hairy hand leads to one place: the Human Realm. Who wants to go there?”

“My mission is only to see a few worthy spirits sent down, and they will see the mission through. You couldn’t possibly think that I intend on going back down there, do you?” protested the Monkey King.

“It’s a slippery slope into mortal flesh. You saw how crazy the Jade Emperor was acting. What sort of mess do you think the Human Realm will be in? If you want that mission done successfully, you will have to go down there yourself, inevitably. First you just pop down to aid those in trouble—they pray to you, your heart is moved, so you settle a really tough obstacle that they can’t quite overcome. No big deal, right? Next thing you know, you find while you’re down there that something else is wrong that needs fixing, and then something else goes wrong down there that you didn’t expect and you have to fix that too; and then there is something else and something else. Before you know it, you can’t fly very high anymore and can’t escape in the Human Realm. Then you start to enjoy human food and the sight of some ladies down there catches your eye and that’s it, you’re finished.”

The prospect of going back down to the Human Realm (which was also known as the Realm of Illusion for the deluded stupor that its inhabitants naturally lived in) and having to complete another 81 tribulations and reach Enlightenment all over again, seemed too terrible to contemplate for the Monkey King.

The Monkey King tried to brush it off: “Clearly you lack the wisdom of a Buddha such as myself.”

“Here,” said Pigsy, throwing the Monkey King a peach he took from the Dragon Palace. “I suppose if you get stuck down there, you can pray to me. Actually, on second thought, don’t do that.” Pigsy gave a peal of laughter and sauntered off, saying, “Good luck! You’re going to need it!”

The Monkey King took a look at the map provided to him by the Jade Emperor and set off in search of a place called Camelot. It was a place he had never heard of and, judging by the map, seemed dangerously close to the Human Realm.

He flew through the clouds and stars and sweeping vistas of Heaven. At one point feeling sure that he was lost he came upon three grassy hills, each with a sage standing there, expounding his teachings to surrounding disciples. The Monkey King found this a bit strange since he didn’t recognize any of these sages, but he was quickly comforted by the fact that there were three matching hills on the map and the note, “Answer three riddles.”

The first sage, the Monkey King approached was wrapped in a majestic, flowing white toga and stood upon steps that ascended to a huge temple with massive Greek columns, similar to the Parthenon that human beings might see in Greece but splendidly painted and adorned, and of course not crumbling into pieces as the Earthly building is doing. After a bit of introductions, the Monkey King found out that this was the Greek sage Socrates, who was flanked by Plato and Aristotle and many other students.

Socrates greeted him and said, “Well, dear Monkey King, the tradition is such that outsiders must answer three riddles before advancing further and receiving directions. The first shall be given by me.”

“I accept your terms, Master Socrates. Fire away,” said the Monkey King.

Socrates said,

“You think you have it but you don’t.  
It knows what will be or what won’t.  
If you should grab it, it transforms,  
Yet lifts confusion and sets norms.  
It’s used to teach the ignorant  
And makes a lying tongue relent.  
It’s always wise as well as sound;  
It can surmise and then expound,  
And yet I know I do not know it,  
And yet in knowing this I show it.  
What could it be; what is its name?  
How, where, and when can it lay claim,  
To all that’s known beneath each star  
And well beyond to realms afar?”

The Monkey King replied, “Master Socrates, I think you must mean Truth. What we normally call Zhēn (真) where I come from.”

Socrates replied, “Excellent, dear Monkey King, you may proceed.”

He then stamped the Monkey King’s map with his seal, which contained the ancient Greek word for Truth, Aletheia (ἀλήθεια), as well as an outline of the façade of the temple behind him, which included the eight columns and rectangular piece above them, known as a pediment.

“Hm, that’s a very nice building,” the Monkey King commented.

Now he flew on to the next sage upon a hill and had some words with those upon this hill. Apparently, this sage was known as Jesus Christ and he was surrounded by his twelve disciples and besides them there were many more listening to Jesus teach as well as hosts of angels dressed for battle. The Monkey King could sense the grandness of this sage from the great multitude around him.

“Master Jesus, please let me know what riddle I must answer to proceed,” said the Monkey King.

Jesus, pleased with the readiness of his visitor, said,

“I think of others all the time  
And how to lead them best in life;  
I would forgive each of their crime  
And stop them from their path of strife,  
Yet when I gather them to me  
Upon a lush and grassy hill,  
They soon forget and think they’re free  
To wander forth with beastly will.  
This is the tale always the same,  
So, tell me then what is my name?”

The Monkey King replied with little hesitation, “Why, sir, you must mean Compassion, Benevolence, and Kindness. The values of Goodness which remains universal, and which we call Shàn (善) or Cíbēi (慈悲) where I come from.”

Jesus had a good laugh and said, “You are close, but no.”

The Monkey King repeated the poem a few times to himself with the help of those around him, but couldn’t find a new answer. Then Socrates came to him, for he had taken an interest in seeing how the Monkey King fared on the other riddles and had thus flown to the next hill to observe. He said to the Monkey King, “Well I can’t be sure, but I think you may do well to put the riddles together.”

The Monkey King began repeating the first riddle,

You think you have it but you don’t.  
It knows what will be or what won’t.  
If you should grab it, it transforms...

He stopped on this third line. At this point, he realized that the answer was indeed Compassion, but that it had transformed in the course of the riddle. Transformed into what? Returning to the language in Jesus’s riddle, including the “grassy hill” and “bestly will,” the Monkey King thought he had it.

“A shepherd,” said the Monkey King, “a symbol of Compassion.”

“Well done, Monkey King,” said Jesus. “You may proceed!” Jesus then stamped his seal, which contained the word Compassion in Latin, “Benevolentia,” and in Aramaic, as well as the Chi Rho symbol that combines the Greek initials for the word Christ (ΧΡ), which means the Anointed One.

The Monkey King made his way to the final hill and final sage, who he soon found out was named Moses and who was flanked by Aaron, Joshua, and other Hebrew prophets. He carried with him two tablets that shot forth ten beams of powerful, golden light—these were the Ten Commandments.

“Master Moses, I have come this far and request that you allow me to finish this final task in order to reach my destination,” said the Monkey King.

Moses stroked his prodigious beard and said, “Very well then, I will not keep you, Mr. Monkey King. Listen well:

I have a home that boasts all rock-hard walls  
That stands up tall while every other falls  
That is unmoved by storms or by emotion,  
by life’s commotion or time’s erosion.  
That is unswayed by any piercing pain  
And bears its injuries without complaint.  
Upon this house I’ll raise my own offspring  
Upon this house and yet beneath my wing...  
So who am I who to you sing?”

The Monkey King found this the most puzzling of all of the riddles. He spoke his thoughts aloud to Moses, “Well if I start again with the principle then we have Forbearance, what we call Rěn (忍) where I am from. But what is the symbol of Forbearance. Well if it has rock hard walls it must be a mountain, which bears all of the elements over the ages yet still remains. But this riddle seems to go one step further and ask what winged creature makes its home upon a mountain. The answer, therefore, is most certainly the magnificent phoenix.”

Jesus, who had joined Socrates in tagging along with their strange visitor to see how he fared, shook his head and smiled at Socrates.

Moses bellowed a loud laugh and then grew serious and simply said, "That's wrong."

Jesus whispered to the Monkey King, "In this region of Heaven, I am afraid that there are no phoenixes upon the mountain tops. What you probably want is an eagle."

"An eagle!" the Monkey King wasted no time in rejoining.

"Ah yes, you have it!" said Moses. "Where is it you want to go? I shall have the seraphim escort you there. But they will stop halfway and make you fly the rest of the way on your own since you guessed wrong the first time. But rest assured, they shall guide you well and make sure you find your way, Mr. Monkey."

The Monkey King's letter was then stamped with the Hebrew word for Forbearance, *Airḳ Aapiaym* (אִרְךָ אַפַּיִם), as well as an outline of the two tablets that Moses was holding.

Then Joshua said a few words to Moses, which the Monkey King couldn't quite make out. But shortly after Moses boomed loud enough for all on his hill to hear, "Dear God, why would he want to go to Camelot?"

## Chapter V. Camelot

The six-winged angels, known as seraphim, deposited the Monkey King within sight of the castle of Camelot, which was a very picturesque sight. The castle was perched upon on cliff, towering above all the surrounding lands. Its turreted walls, towers, and parapets soared impressively high, though the stark gray walls lacked some ornamentation and vibrance in the Monkey King's opinion. As he made his way toward the interesting castle he was surprised to hear someone calling from the forest down below, "Sir Knight! Sir Knight! Please help!"

The Monkey King veered his course and landed in the forest below, where he had heard the call erupt from. Upon walking closer, he observed what appeared to be a beautiful damsel in distress. She was tied to a tree and looked and shouted directly at the Monkey King, who found this scene rather strange. "This is the kind of thing one might encounter in the Human Realm, but not here in Heaven," he thought.

Completely uninterested in the woman's charming beauty, the Monkey King instead was acutely aware of some facts that didn't add up in this scene. The lady's hair and dress were completely unruffled and her cheeks and eyes were relatively smooth and without crease, which was completely unexpected for someone who had presumably been physically assaulted and in some amount of mental turmoil. Shifting his eyes, the Monkey King took note of skulls and bones lying in the distance and the terrible smell of... a demon!

Just as he raised his staff in caution, the damsel's clear blue eyes turned an inky black. The damsel-demon lunged at the Monkey King with outstretched claws in a bloodthirsty, mouth-foaming rage. But, as quickly as this demon moved, it was all as if in slow motion for the Monkey King moved at a speed that transcended anything within the Three Realms. He spun around, jumped in the air, and brought his huge staff down on the head of the demon. He brought it down a few more times on its head until the monstrous beast seemed thoroughly destroyed.

The Monkey King flew above the forest and continued his flight to Camelot. Before arriving, though, he heard another voice. He listened closer and heard a damsel's voice yell once again "Sir Knight! Sir Knight! Please help!" He used his supernatural vision to see that it was another beautiful damsel in distress, but also observed that there were the same telltale signs of a trap. Then he heard another soft damsel voice saying essentially the same thing and then another

and another. He was beginning to realize why Moses was so dismissive of him visiting Camelot. It was surrounded by demons!

Rather than flying directly into Camelot, over the high walls, the Monkey King stopped at the draw bridge and made a proper request for an audience with King Arthur, except he read the Jade Emperor's notes wrong, dropping the "Ar" and mistaking the "u" for an "o." He said "Thor," to which he received, "Thor? You have the wrong place, Monkey. You will have to go to Asgard for him. This is Camelot."

"Good sir, I am sure that I want Camelot. Please see if your king will see me," said the Monkey King. "I have my document properly stamped here by the Three Sages of the West."

The drawbridge was lowered and the Monkey King's document was inspected and approved. Finally, he was escorted into the court of King Arthur:

Grand knights around the table sat.  
They ate and ate, but were not fat.  
The minstrels played a splendid tune,  
A never-ending, mealtime boon.  
From mouths, like singing springtime birds,  
There flew out vaunting, vibrant words.  
And then came in before these lords...  
The Monkey King.

The hands with food froze in midair.  
The mouths stopped chewing on the fare.  
The flute and harp played music wrong,  
And ceased their notes before too long.  
The tongues once dancing now went stiff  
As if their partner fell off a cliff.  
And then Sir Monkey caught a whiff...  
Of something strange:

The food they ate had half gone bad  
Some bowls were cracked and looking sad.  
The minstrels were a ragged bunch,  
Who looked like they just lost their lunch.  
The banners on the wall were tattered;  
Some armor looked unshined and battered.  
So from this all Sir Monkey gathered...  
Things weren't quite right.

All of this, along with the abundant demon-damsels, confirmed for the Monkey King's suspicion that this Camelot was really not too different from the illusory Human Realm at all, and he was doubly on his guard. He was also fighting off the sinking feeling that Pigsy was right and this quest was turning into a slippery slope into the Human Realm where the chance of return was slim at best.

But, before these dismal thoughts could gestate for very long, King Arthur, who was handsome and immediately endearing in his tone, said, “Sir Monkey, my guardsman tell me you are here on a grand quest and seek an audience. Well here you have it!”

“Great King Thor, I—” the Monkey King was cut off by peals of laughter.

“Well, Sir Monkey, if you want the Norseman Thor, you have come to the wrong hall,” said King Arthur. “You are in Camelot. I am your host, King Arthur.”

“Good King *Arthur*, my sincere apologies. My tongue is a foreign one and therefore a bit clumsy. You are who I seek,” said the Monkey King. He explained the mission, passed down from The Creator, giving its general outline: the saving of sentient beings, the evil red dragon, the worthy spirits, and so on. Arthur’s court were all awed at the grand scope of such a quest and a little delighted, for they loved noble quests and this quest certainly seemed to be a noble one, even if a bit confusing to their minds, which had never ventured beyond Camelot and its surrounding lands.

“This peril and tribulation you speak of, Sir Monkey,” said King Arthur, “I must say these words ring painfully true. Though we appear very merry here at Camelot, things are not as they once were. Demons roam the forest and lands around Camelot, growing ever stronger, and we, the supposed great knights you see before you, are here, locked away behind the high walls—more like prisoners than rulers.”

“Aye... aye!” the knights of the hall broke in with words of agreement.

Arthur continued, “I have seen the Red Dragon in the distance from our walls. The land and everything in it grow ill and misshapen under its powers. A quest to destroy it is certainly what we need to free Camelot from its spell. In fact, some time ago, Merlin, the trusted sorcerer who looked after Camelot for so long, left his Crystal Cave and traveled down to the Human Realm himself convinced of this very quest, but he has not returned, and we have lost all hope of his return.”

The Monkey King nodded his head gravely. The mission was not to specifically to destroy the Red Dragon, as he understood it, but he didn’t want to contradict King Arthur and responded, “Thank you, your Majesty. That is why I have come to request that your greatest knight, one by the name of—” the Monkey King fumbled with his paper. “Sir Lancelot, whose fighting prowess is renowned above all, be sent down to the Human Realm.”

King Arthur gravely replied, “I’m afraid that Sir Lancelot has precisely been one of Camelot’s chief victims of the curse. He succumbed to the demons that lay traps of lust right outside our walls and has fallen severely ill. He is not here among us today and is confined to a bed upstairs.”

“This is bad,” the Monkey King thought to himself. “Much worse than I had thought.” He swallowed, looked around, and raised the letter from the Goddess of Mercy up in the air for all to see, saying, “Is there any brave knight here then who will make the quest?”

Contemplating a quest that even the magnificent sorcerer Merlin had failed at and which had permanently demobilized their greatest warrior, Lancelot, a few feet out of their front door, seemed to be too much for any knight to reasonably stomach.

Finally, King Arthur said, looking older and more tired already, “It shall be I then. It must be this way.”

“No!” said a voice. “Uncle, it shall be I!”

Not far from King Arthur’s table, out of a group of older and larger knights, emerged a young, beardless knight with blond hair and blue eyes.

“It is not proper for a king to go on a perilous quest when there are so many able-bodied knights around,” said the volunteer.

“Excellent. And who is the brave knight who has taken up the quest,” asked the Monkey King.

“Sir Gawain, at your service, Sir Monkey,” the knight said. “It is a privilege to have an opportunity to lift this curse over Camelot and free its lands from the shadow of the Red Dragon. It is also a privilege too to serve my great King, Arthur. But, I must admit I have a personal reason as well. Long ago, I made the mistake of accepting a love token indecently from another man’s wife. I hid it, lied about it, and took it in hopes that it might safeguard me against a foe. I have carried this stain upon me ever since that day,” Sir Gawain pointed to a scar along his neck. “It is something I have waited ages to wipe clean. Is this not the perfect opportunity?”

“Aye!” said King Arthur in agreement.

“Aye! Aye! Aye!” resounded the hall.

Sir Gawain raised a chalice of wine up to the hall. A chalice was shoved into the Monkey King’s hand as well. They all raised their cups in response to Sir Gawain and drank. The Monkey King did not drink at first but pretended to and instead sniffed the wine. It smelled fine, so he tasted it and was surprised to find it quite pleasant—something more like grape juice than Earthly wine.

Sir Gawain turned to the Monkey King and said, “Let us not delay, Sir Monkey. We quest to the Human Realm!”

“Yes,” said the Monkey King, somewhat lackluster. To himself he thought, “*We* are not going. My job is just to send *you* down!”

## Chapter VI. Mount Olympus

The Monkey King and Sir Gawain set out for their next recruitment destination: Mount Olympus. The Monkey King had been given directions by the same seraphim who had taken him halfway to Camelot. Through the clouds and mountains they ascended. At first, the Monkey King had Sir Gawain hold onto his magic staff, but not long after leaving Camelot, Sir Gawain found that he too could fly. After a bit of searching through mountain peaks, they came to a grand scene that Sir Gawain said must be Mount Olympus:

Greek columns carved into the rock  
Lined the towering sheer cliff face.  
The Gods there lounged about, took stock,  
Peering down through cloudy space.

Upon the summit was the throne  
Of mighty Zeus the Thunder King;  
His muscles chiseled like hard stone,  
His piercing glance could leave a sting.

And when the visitors arrived,  
He uttered not a single sound,  
But leapt, and in his hand contrived  
A lightning bolt he’d soon unbound!



Who would expect such a harsh host  
Who sought to make each guest a ghost?

The Monkey King and Sir Gawain were taken quite off guard when, before they could even open their mouths and issue a greeting, Zeus—who was variously known as the great Father of the Gods, Cloud Gatherer, Jove, Jupiter, and Thunder King—leapt from his throne, summoned a thunderbolt in his hand, and sent it crashing down at their feet, making the whole mountain rumble and the ground crack and split right between the Monkey King and Sir Gawain.

Immediately, Ares, God of War, and his sister Athena, Goddess of War, leapt out, both brandishing huge spears and shields. Ares fired his spear at Gawain, who blocked it with his shield but was knocked over. Ares took the opportunity to draw a short sword and rush in for the attack. Luckily, Gawain scrambled to his feet in time to absorb the blow on his shield, with some difficulty, and deal a counter blow that Ares took on his own shield, with ease.

Athena fired her spear at the Monkey King, but he simply leaned to the side and let it pass by him. He had done too much fighting against too many much greater foes for this young lady to be a serious threat. She rushed at him with her short sword, but he effortlessly sidestepped her lunge. She swung again and then again. Realizing his technique, she took a large arcing swing, so he vaulted on his staff to a different part of the mountain out of her range.

Athena raised her hand and called, “Archer Gods!” Immediately Apollo and his sister Artemis appeared with long bows, Apollo’s silver and Artemis’s gold, as well as magic sheaths of an incalculable number of arrows. In what seemed but a few seconds, they had each launched a hundred arrows at the Monkey King. This time the Monkey King vaulted off of Mount Olympus a good distance away. He had given up his taste for the pure thrill and challenge of combat and kept his mind on what was truly important, which was getting their help.

Athena did not want him to get away so easily while he was still in the range of Olympus. She transformed herself into a giant eagle and flew after him, stretching out her enormous talons, each the size of the Monkey King and swooped in for the kill. Seeing that she was more trouble than he had imagined, the Monkey King gave a sigh and scratched his head. He leapt toward the eagle and transformed himself into a blue and red phoenix that was three times as large and a hundred times more stunningly colorful to look out. The spectators on Mount Olympus, including Sir Gawain, all seemed to let out a collective “Oooo” in amazement. The phoenix’s ornate tail trailed behind it and its mighty beak let out a roaring shriek that sent the eagle diving away.

But, Athena was determined. Still as an eagle, she dove to escape, then soared around and came back, heading straight for the phoenix. As the eagle flew, its feathers started to come off and were replaced by a thick orange fur. It also grew larger. Soon the eagle grew into a giant griffin, which had the body and back legs of a lion and the wings, head, and front talons of an eagle. Now the griffin was about the same size as the phoenix but far more ferocious. The phoenix flipped backward and dove to get away. The more limber phoenix flew up and down through the clouds, dodging the griffin’s attacks. The phoenix tried to shake the griffin for good by diving down to the mountain peaks and then the mountain valleys. Still, the griffin pursued.

Finally, the Monkey King in phoenix form decided to dive further down, so far that he dove headfirst into the sea, creating an enormous splash. Athena in eagle form halted above the sea, confused as she watched the sea become peaceful after the splash and lost all sign of the phoenix. She called out to her uncle, the Sea God, “Poseidon, Earth Shaker, arise and—” but

before she could finish, a long Chinese dragon flew out of the sea. Its green, furry-maned head alone was large enough to swallow the griffin in one or two bites. Its long, thin body had two strong forearms with clawed hands and far down its long body, two back legs with clawed feet. The dragon's body undulated through the air and flew around menacingly over the griffin.

The griffin flew away, terrified, to Mount Olympus where all of the Olympian gods came to hold a council. Zeus gave out instructions and gestured with muscular arms and huge hands. Once they were ready, they all set to work. Apollo and Artemis transformed into giant white, winged horses, known as pegasuses, Ares and Athena transformed into colossal one-eyed giants known as cyclopes and roared upon the pegasuses wielding giant spears in their hands. Meanwhile, the Blacksmith God Hephaestus manned a giant crossbow-looking device, known as a ballista, that he had fashioned himself from adamant, the hardest metal known to the Olympian gods, and which shot extremely sharp diamond-tipped arrows. Additionally, Poseidon had received Athena's cutoff call for help and participated in Zeus's war council. He emerged from the ocean with his trident rising upon a surging wave alongside the six-headed, bloodthirsty sea monster known as Scylla that he had summoned. The Mighty Hercules too came flying through the air with his studded club, ready for a fight. The number of Olympian gods taking part was too many to describe here. All of these gods together mounted an attack on the green dragon from every direction, quickly converging upon it.

It was hard to tell which was the first attack to make contact, whether it was Ares' spear and Hephaestus's diamond-studded arrow. In any case, the first blow generated an incredibly bright flash, brighter than any seen before on Mount Olympus. It was so bright that it immediately blinded all of the combatants and spectators, spreading an overpowering golden light. Even when the light had faded, it still remained as an afterglow in everyone's eyes and disoriented them as they looked around at what seemed to be completely different surroundings. Everyone present, including Zeus standing in front of his throne, suddenly found themselves upon a flat, brown plain that seemed something like a desert. In the distance they counted five towering mountains that lined the horizon.

"Where did he go?" asked the cyclops Athena.

"Where did *we* go?" asked the cyclops Ares.

"Something very strange is going on here," said Zeus, looking around.

"Look!" said Poseidon, pointing straight up.

Filling roughly half of the sky's dome was a faint structure that was getting closer. It looked as if a planet were going to crash into them. A moment of scanning the shape and contours of the planet, which was getting closer and clearer, indicated that it had some sort of face on it. The moments passed and they started to point out the features of the face to those standing next to them. Soon, it became clear to a few of those looking that the planet was in the shape of the Monkey King's face, but it was glowing with the Buddha's infinite radiance. As most of them started to realize what they were looking at, the planet-sized face opened its vast mouth and said one word, creating an all-consuming noise:

Resounding sound came pounding  
Through ears and then rebounding,  
Reverberating,  
Unabating,  
So loud it was astounding.

Each muscle felt the shaking  
And even bones were quaking,  
Debilitating,  
Oscillating,  
And yet the ground wasn't breaking.

The Tathagata's palm  
Had made the fighting calm,  
Stupefying,  
Pacifying,  
Quelling every qualm.

The Buddha's mighty glowing  
In brilliant colors showing,  
Magnificently,  
Majestically,  
A goodness that's all-knowing.

They all caught the meaning of the Monkey King vast word, "Enough!" even if they couldn't quite make the word out specifically. Looking around Sir Gawain, Zeus, and others were realizing that the five mountains in the distance were in fact the Monkey King's five fingers and the ground beneath them was actually the flesh on his palm. And then, in a flash, it all disappeared and everyone fell a few inches down to the ground or patch of sky around Mt. Olympus where they previously were. The Monkey King, however, materialized in the spot where he had started his visit, directly in front of Zeus's throne. The Thunder King had changed his demeanor quite significantly by this time and bellowed: "Great Monkey! You have power to surpass an Olympian god's—that's for certain! Let no god here cross you or your friend. You shall be honored guests on Mt. Olympus!"

Before the Monkey King could open his mouth and get a word out, there was a flurry of activity as a table was hoisted up from lower chambers and chairs were assembled. He and Sir Gawain were ushered into seats near to Zeus's seat, which was at the head of the table. A feast of roasted meats, fruits, cheeses, and wine quickly was placed on the spread and a commanding goddess entered the scene, orchestrating the affair.

"Great Monkey, let me introduce myself! I am Hera, Queen of the Olympians and Wife of Zeus," said Hera. "Please understand that under normal circumstances, we do not let anyone set foot upon Mount Olympus except those of us who have lived here for thousands of years and have the Olympian Ichor running through our godly veins. These are the ancient laws that we abide by."

The Monkey King said, "Good Queen Hera, I have every respect for your laws and am sorry to have caused you any inconvenience. The Creator has dispatched me upon a mission to send down two brave spirits to the Human Realm to complete a quest there that is of the utmost importance in the saving of sentient beings. Sir Gawain of Camelot here has joined this noble quest and I am looking for one more such hero."

"To the Human Realm? Really?" asked Zeus, smiling and popping some grapes in his mouth.

"Really," said the Monkey King.

“Then, what? Shall we call for volunteers?” Zeus asked in a flippant tone that was lost on the Monkey King.

“No, that will not be necessary. There is a specific one that I am looking for.” Looking at the scribbles on the paper from the Jade Emperor, the Monkey King said, “One great warrior named... named... Hairless.”

The Olympians all laughed at the Monkey King very much like they laughed at him at Camelot.

Apollo, standing nearby, strode up and took the paper in his hand to have a look. After a minute of scanning, he smiled and told the fascinated crowd, “Hercules! He seeks Hercules!”

Everyone laughed. Zeus extended his huge right arm with open hand to the crowd, calling for Hercules. The crowd parted and Hercules, with his hulking muscles and studded club resting on his shoulder, walked forward.

“What do you require of me, Father Zeus,” said Hercules.

“A quest to the Human Realm. Nothing less.” Zeus said, maintaining a straight face. He motioned for Hercules to sit at the table next to them.

“What punishment have I done to deserve this?” said Hercules, cracking a half smile and sending the crowd into waves of chuckling.

“Indeed! A good question,” said Zeus. “Great Monkey, what evil deed has Hercules committed that you would have him be trapped forever in the misery of the Human Realm?”

The Monkey King, seeing now that he was facing universal disinterest in the quest, said, “Well, the two worthy spirits sent down will return once they have completed their mission.” This sent a wave of whispers and quieter chuckles through the crowd.

Zeus swallowed his smile and strained to speak frankly with the Monkey King: “It was the case, a long, long time ago that we Olympian gods could do just about anything. We did, after all, bring Hercules up here though he was only a half-god. But that sort of thing is completely impossible now and has been for many, many ages. Once you go down, there is no returning. Don’t know that?”

“I beg your pardon, Good King Zeus,” said the Monkey King, “but it is possible. The monk Xuanzang successfully did it along with myself and others. It took us 81 major tribulations, but we succeeded and returned.”

“And, may I ask, how long ago was that?” said Zeus.

The Monkey King’s head tilted back and he hurriedly did some mental calculations, “Maybe 1,400 Earth years or so... hmm, I see your point.”

“My daughter, Aphrodite, Goddess of Beauty, was lured down there to the Human Realm and has never returned. I sent Thetis the Sea Goddess after her, but she never returned either. Then I sent the Messenger God Hermes, and he never returned.”

Sir Gawain nudged the Monkey King and said to him, “That sounds much like Merlin’s situation.”

Zeus continued, “And the amount of delusion and turmoil we see down there in the Human Realm has only gotten worse and worse since then.”

Hera added, “Yes, that is part of the reason why we are so hostile toward visitors as well.”

Zeus said, “I cannot send Hercules or any other Olympian down there for you. It is a death sentence for a god and I never should have sent the others.”

The Monkey King was unsure what to say. He became quiet and looked visibly disappointed, his lips pursing together and his eyes looking hollowly about. While Sir Gawain enjoyed the feast, the Monkey King ate not a morsel.

“Dear, Great Monkey, don’t look so sad,” said Hera. “One with as much power as you could certainly solve all of this, could he not?”

The Monkey King vaguely smiled. But quickly felt ashamed as he hadn’t made it clear to them that he had no intention of going to the Human Realm himself. He knew deep down that the mission did seem rather hopeless. Then he resigned himself to the thought that he would do whatever The Creator had wanted. The message he received from The Creator, via the Goddess of Mercy, did not tell the Monkey King to go down, but if that was what The Creator really required then he would loathe to do anything else but that. If ‘two worthy spirits’ were needed then he would be one of them.

Upon giving up all hope for himself, his train of thought was interrupted.

“Wait I have it!” Hera suddenly said. “Lord Zeus, could we not send someone from Hades with him. Why not Achilles? He would love to earn his freedom from Hades, no matter the risk.”

Zeus stroked his beard and said, “I think you may be onto something. Achilles, Great Monkey, is a half-god comparable to Hercules and I suspect that you will find him only too willing to take up your quest. Here...” Zeus reached under his throne and pulled out a chest, which he opened and withdrew a single key from. “This will free Achilles from the shackle of Hades.” Zeus went to hand the key to the astonished Monkey King. But, just before he placed the key in the Monkey King’s hand, he stopped and became quiet and serious again. He said, “Just keep an eye on him in the Human Realm. Who knows what kind of mischief he could get himself into down there.” Then, satisfied with his word of warning, he plopped the key into the Monkey King’s hand.

## **Chapter VII. The Underworld**

The Monkey King and Sir Gawain flew their way through the fragrant clouds and mysterious mists of the upper reaches of the Three Realms down to the lower realm of the Three Realms, where the air turned strikingly acrid and sulfurous. Having overshot their destination a bit, they landed in the deepest region first and beheld a horrifying scene, which was recorded by a bard from that era:

The horrors of hell are unthinkably bleak:  
There’s flames from the ground and a blood-curdling shriek!  
There’s demons who work on a poor wretch they’re flaying;  
There’s putrid aromas from sinners decaying.

There’s Sisyphus painfully pushing a boulder  
That’s tearing his hands and dislodging his shoulder,  
And when to the top of the slope he arrives,  
Immediately back to the bottom it drives!

Tity-us is strapped down and left to be eaten  
By vultures who punish the deeds of this cretin.

They pull out his liver and gobble it up,  
And then it grows back, and again they will sup!

There's Tantalus wishing to grab for some fruit,  
But reaches and reaches in fruitless pursuit,  
And bends down to water to quench his great thirst  
But water recedes, for this man has been cursed!

The horrible scenes of the horror that's hell  
Are better to turn from, and not too much dwell,  
Yet let them remind both the old and the young,  
Committers of evil will later be wrung!

Sir Gawain, quite distressed by what he saw, said to the Monkey King, "I think we have gone too far! Let us ascend at once, Sir Monkey! I beg you!"

Out of the deepest, darkest reaches of hell, the two of them sailed upward upon the currents of air and poisonous gasses until the flames and shrieks and horrors were but a speck in the distance and Sir Gawain could regain his composure. Now they were surrounded by gently rolling meadows of asphodels, which are star-shaped flowers with six, long white petals. These were not at all ugly flowers, but there was an eerie dullness and grayness that hung upon the meadows, for this was still Hades and souls condemned there still could not escape.

The two travelers landed in a meadow and looked around. They could see translucent ghosts wandering about disheartened or sitting aimlessly, oblivious to the two's presence.

"This is where Apollo told us to pour libations, cover it barley, sacrifice an ewe, or was it a ram?" Sir Gawain scratched his head. While he was contemplating this, the Monkey King used his powers of transformation to turn the peach he had been given by Pigsy into a large bowl full of wonderfully ripe and succulent peaches that seemed to glow in the dull surroundings. The Monkey King took a bite of one and let the aroma drift around until the ghosts one after another came to sample the peaches that the Monkey King willingly offered them.

"It works!" said Sir Gawain.

"Tell me, where can we find Achilles, Son of Peleus," asked the Monkey King, recalling the words he was told to use. He spoke to no ghost in particular. Once they had eaten some of the peaches, the ghosts whispered amongst themselves until one finally said, "We will summon him for you," and promptly flew away with a peach in hand.

After much waiting and just as the peaches were running out, a large ghost appeared with thick, muscular arms, a chiseled looking head and shoulders, and a long beard of curly brown hair that came to a sharp point.

"Who summons Achilles?" said the figure dismally, adding, "If that is even who I am?"

"We seek Achilles, the great warrior of the Trojan War," said Sir Gawain. "Are you he or are you not he?"

"Alas, I am Achilles, the cursed man whom you seek. I have spent so long in this godforsaken place that I have almost forgotten. I have no name here, no one does," said Achilles.

The Monkey King said, "Great Achilles, we need your help in the Human Realm in the saving of sentient beings who face—"

“Yes, whatever it is, yes, if you can get me out of here, I will serve you for however long it takes in the Human Realm. I will travel to any corner of the world. I will fight any champion you choose. I will kill any enemy you have,” said Achilles.

The Monkey King nodded to himself at the great ease he had in accomplishing that, a far cry from what he encountered on Mt. Olympus. “Well then,” he said and pulled out the key that Zeus gave him. Achilles lifted his leg, and when he did so, the shackle upon his leg became visible. The shackle had an extremely long chain that allowed Achilles, like all the other ghosts, to get within range of the Human Realm but never quite make it there, such that they almost always gave up trying after a few years and milled about the asphodel meadows feeling very little but a dull aching until their time was up. In fact, no one had realized it, but Achilles’ sentence had expired exactly when the Monkey King and Sir Gawain arrived.

With his leg unshackled, Achilles regained some of his color and in his hand materialized a giant ash wood spear, which had been his companion for so many years in the Human Realm. Achilles breathed in deeply and touched his own skin, his face aglow. “Sorcerer Monkey, who I owe greatly. What shall I call you?”

“Hmmm... well, Sir Gawain calls me Sir Monkey. That should be fine,” he said. “If we are done here, let’s get going. There is no time to lose.”

Together, the three flew back up to the upper third of the Three Realms, which shone doubly beautiful and blissful after where they had been. The descent to the Human Realm would involve some further study and the Monkey King directed them to a mountain bluff overlooking the Human Realm. He would need to give clear instructions to Achilles and Sir Gawain on what to do down there and make sure that they entered at the right spot. Other preparations would also need to be made. First, he transformed the armor of Sir Gawain and the ancient Greek clothing of Achilles into plain brown monks’ robes, like what he wore. Then he transformed Sir Gawain’s sword and shield into two elegant fountain pens. His sword sheath became a pen holder that neatly fit them both. Achilles’ spear became a walking staff. He instructed them that at will their weapons could resume their original shape and powers. Next, the Monkey King carefully read over the notes from the Jade Emperor and the note from the Goddess of Mercy.

Meanwhile, Sir Gawain and Achilles strolled around the mountaintop. After a short walk, the reverse side of the mountain was revealed to them. It was an unbelievably beautiful sight:

The mountain mists of Heaven part...  
Revealing a valley of gardens below,  
Their branches waiting to impart  
Delectable fruits that no mortal could know.  
Their paths and streams pull on the heart,  
And beckon the soul to return to the flow,  
To enter fables real beyond art—  
A grace, a sweet cleansing, if one could just go!

“It must be Hera’s garden!” said Achilles.

“I doubt that,” said Sir Gawain. “Perhaps the Garden of Eden. That part has some sort of structure... Perhaps the Hanging Gardens of Babylon.”

“It is divine!” said Achilles.

“Well, we are in Heaven,” Gawain said.

“I say, man, it is truly wonderful here!” said Achilles. “How could we go down to the Human Realm after looking at this? This Monkey has done something extraordinary by freeing me, true, but it defies the will to get caught up in some conflict on Earth.”

“He isn’t just a Monkey, Achilles,” Gawain said.

“Can you imagine the sorts of contests and games we could have here?” Achilles grandly motioned with his huge hands and arms. “We could do swimming contests in that river, a foot race along that main path there, perhaps archery there, and then we will relax and enjoy the incredible fruit. I say, Gawain, a man could stay here forever contentedly!”

“You are bound to the Monkey, Achilles, do not cross him,” said Gawain. “You were not here when we were at Mt. Olympus. He showed his true form. It was... well, it was beyond comprehension.”

“I see.” Achilles said, grudgingly. Looking back at the enchanting garden, he said, “So, you’re sure I couldn’t beat him in a fight?”

“Positive,” Gawain replied.

“I know. What we need is a test. See this spear,” at once Achilles’ staff turned back into his ash wood spear. “Try to hold it.”

Achilles left it standing straight up, perpendicular to the mountain’s ground. Sir Gawain tried in vain to lift it. All that he did was offset its weight so that it started to slightly tip towards him. Now he tried with all of his effort, both hands and back to slow the spear’s tipping, but again all in vain. Finally, he leapt out of the way and it smashed on the ground creating a tremor and partially cracking the mountain.

“We shall see if the Monkey can lift my spear, which no one has ever been able to lift except for myself,” said Achilles.

Sir Gawain rolled his eyes at this, which was not entirely lost on Achilles, who said, “Now certainly an Olympian god might be able to lift it, but not I think without a bit of effort and difficulty. So, we determine if he really is as strong as the Olympian gods and we can gauge how formidable he would really be if he got out of control.”

Before Gawain could speak, Achilles was already making his way back to the Monkey King. Achilles carefully rolled the spear down to the rock where the Monkey King was sitting with his back to Achilles. “Oh, Sir Monkey, my apologies, my spear has gotten away from me. If it would not be too much trouble, would you mind tossing it here.”

The Monkey King stood up, turned around, looked at Achilles, looked down at the spear, looked back at Achilles, and finally sighed. With a slight flick of one of his toes, the Monkey King sent the spear, which was turned longwise with its sharp point pointing away from Achilles, flying at such incredible speed and with such incredible force at Achilles that it hit him in the chest and sent him flying 100 feet backwards.

The Monkey King had supernormal hearing and heard every word of Achilles and Gawain’s conversation, so he thought he had better teach Achilles a lesson. However, teaching Achilles a lesson brought no satisfaction to the Monkey King—quite the opposite. He was now more distressed than Achilles was. The Monkey King now realized, without a doubt, that he must escort the two Western heroes he was guiding down to the Human Realm himself and personally lead the quest, unconditionally, to completion. That being the case, he was beginning to wonder why he was bringing them at all. As Achilles scooped himself off the ground, the Monkey King tried to consoled himself, “These things must all be predestined... right?”

## **Chapter VIII. The Gateway**



Looking like three monks in brown robes, two with staves, the three located a spot on the globe of Earth called California and headed in its direction as it slowly spun away. They flew through fragrant mists of Heaven that grew thinner and thinner. Meanwhile, they were increasingly surrounded by the illusory blackness of dead space that is found so abundantly in the Human Realm.

*Thump!*

This sudden noise was quickly followed by two more thumps as first the Monkey King in front and then the other two crashed into something.

“What godforsaken thing is this?!” Achilles said while pushing himself off of what seemed to be a translucent, smooth surface. All three started to feel around and knock on the glass-like barrier they had run into.

“It just keeps going and going,” Gawain said. With his feet flying as before, he crawled along the barrier with his hands touching it to make sure that he didn’t bump into it again.

“It must surround the entire Human Realm,” said the Monkey King.

“Let’s smash it, I say,” Achilles said, banging his staff on it, but creating no vibration.

“We could...” said the Monkey King while tapping it gingerly with his staff. “But, I am afraid if I did that the pieces may fall to Earth and destroy it or at least kill many sentient beings, and we are precisely going to the Human Realm to help save sentient beings. No, we’ll have to find another way.”

Standing upright on the barrier, the Monkey King used his supernatural vision to look around. His eyes squinted hard as he slowly turned in a circle, thoroughly scanning far and near for a clue to the source of the barrier. About 200 degrees around his scanning circle, he said slowly yet still as an exclamation, “A-ha!” He had spotted on the vast, glasslike barrier on which he stood a distinct structure that looked promising.

“This way,” said the Monkey King.

The three flew for a while until they came to a red brick building that was partially covered in ivy and looked somewhat like a castle. A sign said, “Welcome to the Gateway to the Human Realm.” Smaller print beneath read, “Provided by the Scholars.” Behind the building and sign there was a large steel dome with a door on it, making it look something like a giant, metal igloo. Outside the building was an incredibly long table with chairs on only the one side closer to the building and the gateway. There sat a single man in a puffy green robe with a large, horizontally flat, octagonal hat. He was reading an old book. When he saw that there were visitors, he hastily put it down and blew a whistle that was hanging around his neck. There was some commotion in the building and the door opened. Now dozens of individuals poured out wearing similar robes that featured different colors and patterns. They all wore the same style flat octagonal hat. Each carried an iron shackle with a small chain and ball as well as a stack of papers.

Once they had finished lining up along the long table, the Monkey King said, “Greetings, scholars! We seek entrance to the Human Realm to complete an important mission given to us by The Creator. May we get in through the dome?”

One of the robed figures who seemed to be the leader, for he was the only one who carried a thick staff that had a large disk at the top, came forward and replied, “Greetings, travelers! We will be only too happy to allow you to enter the gateway, which you call a dome, and travel to the Human Realm. However, I am afraid that we must first have you sign some

paperwork and put on some shackles. Don't worry though, they are for your own benefit, I assure you."

All of the robed figures lining the long table in a neat row took out different documents that needed to be signed in triplicate, and opened their shackles in preparation. They were similar to the shackle and chain that Achilles had just removed from his ankle in Hades. He was visibly agitated.

The Monkey King swallowed and felt a bit overwhelmed by the extent of the paperwork, which outdid the Jade Emperor's bureaucracy by many times.

"How many are there?" the Monkey King asked.

"Oh, about 81," said the leader. "Here, you can start with mine."

The Monkey King, Achilles, and Sir Gawain all looked down at the paper which read, "Contract on the Prohibition of the Use of Abilities Pertaining to Gravity and Related Matters, as Prepared by Sir Isaac Newton, the Father of Physics."

"Who is this knight, Sir Isaac Newton? I have not heard of him," said Sir Gawain.

"Nor I," said Achilles.

The leader earnestly responded, "I am he, and I sincerely apologize if my name has not made its way to your precincts of Heaven. You or any other knight with a sword shall best me any day in a one-on-one fight, but, if I may be so bold, with my quill pen, I think I shall put up a worthy performance against any other knight of whom you have heard in the terrible combat that is known as the calculation of numbers." Sir Isaac Newton smiled and chuckled, looking around at his fellow scholars who also smiled and chuckled.

Sir Gawain raised his eyebrows and whispered to the Monkey King. "This fellow is ridiculous. Shall I shove him aside?"

Preempting his two companions, Achilles stepped forward and said to scholars, "The sign out there says 'Provided by the Scholars.' We used to go back and forth to the Human Realm with no problem. What is it exactly that you are providing? Haven't you just taken away something from us so that you can get what you want?"

Achilles staff turned back into a spear and he looked as if he was about ready to shove it through Sir Isaac Newton's bowels when a scholar appeared mysteriously next to Achilles, having somehow come from behind Achilles, Gawain, and the Monkey King without their knowing. He wore a red and black robe and had a blank yet slightly smiling expression on his face that was strangely disarming. "Do not worry, great warriors," he said. "If we do not weigh you down at all, you will float right up once you get to Earth. Even if you have an important mission, you'll find the state of people down there so odious, so disgusting, so foul that you will constantly have to fight off the desire to return and leave your mission unfulfilled. So this is really just helping you to get done what you need to, like anchoring a ship in the sea so you can complete your task at the local port—that's all. Or, if you are not weighed down and have all of your Heavenly powers available, you will be prone to use them, and human beings will be prone to be jealous and will want you to do what they want. Then, when you don't do it, you might very well end up like Jesus Christ, tortured and nailed to a cross to die like a criminal. I don't think anyone wants that, right?"

Achilles, Gawain, and the Monkey King looked at each other, but no one seemed to find any fault in this reasoning.

"Good," the scholar continued, "In fact, I would not merely settle on 81, I would recommend those additional nine over there on the end. They are optional, but they come with added benefits such wealth, influence, and power."

“Who are they?” asked Sir Gawain.

“Charles Darwin, the Emperor of Evolutionary Theory; Sigmund Freud, the Sultan of Psychoanalysis; Friedrich Nietzsche, the Executor of Existentialism...” he stopped, realizing that the three travelers had no idea about the importance of these individual’s names and fields of scholarship.

“Just don’t forget to warn them, please, Mac!” said Sir Isaac Newton to the scholar in red and black.

Showing a hint of annoyance, the scholar conceded, “Ah, yes, it is true, the additional nine come with a bit of risk. Occasionally the additional shackles are bit too much for the human body to bear and they result in allergies or slight impairments...” looking at Sir Isaac Newton, who was staring at him authoritatively, he continued, “...and in the worst cases physical deformities and paralysis. But, people generally feel the gains outweigh the loses.”

Sir Isaac Newton added, “Take Stephen Hawking for example. He received all of the additional nine and his Earthly body has not reacted well at all. He barely has any movement of his body left—”

“But he is considered the greatest, or at least one of the greatest, scholars in the Human Realm,” the scholar in red and black said.

The Monkey King asked, “What was your name, scholar? You seem very wise.”

“Niccolo Machiavelli, the Patron of Political Science, at your service,” he said, his strange little smile unwavering.

The Monkey King’s eyebrows shot up and he said, “Sir Gawain, Achilles, let me have a word with you please. If you will excuse us, dear scholars.”

Gawain and Achilles huddled around the Monkey King who had walked a good distance from the gateway and its scholars. The Monkey King pulled out the paper from the Jade Emperor and pointed to a few words at the very bottom that read, “Do not trust Machiavelli.”

“I say, this whole thing stunk from the beginning,” said Achilles.

“A knight who is not a knight,” said Sir Gawain, nodding his head.

“Yes, how shall we be of any use in the Human Realm without some supernatural powers at our disposal? I think this Machiavelli speaks sweet words but means ill, unfortunately,” said the Monkey King. “How shall we do this then? If these are demons we are dealing with, then they may be able to easily transform and cause trouble, so we should not underestimate them.”

“Achilles and I shall be on your sides, Sir Monkey, and you shall bust through the door of the gateway while we deter anyone who tries to interfere,” said Gawain.

“But, we do not kill any of the scholars themselves unless they turn out to be demons themselves and show us their true form,” said the Monkey King.

They looked at Achilles.

“In that case, let’s have Achilles deal with the door,” said Gawain. “This way, too, whatever sort of fight they might put up we can be sure that it is no match for the, what was it? Yes, ‘the Tathagata’s palm.’”

“Okay,” said the Monkey King.

“Okay,” said Achilles.

“Right, then straight through the middle,” said Gawain.

Sir Gawain took out his pen set and transformed them into his shield and sword, though he kept the sword sheathed. The three, with Achilles in the middle, walked confidently back toward the long table and were greeted by Machiavelli, who began, “Gentlemen, I hope—” but before he could finish talking, Achilles walked right passed him and used his spear as his support

as he ascended the long table, inadvertently stepping on and crumpling Sir Isaac Newton's contract before leaping down to the other side. Sir Gawain and the Monkey King more tactfully flew over the table, closely flanking Achilles' and keeping an eye out for anyone who looked ready to interfere. The three made their way to the iron dome and Achilles started to test the strength of the door, which he was hoping to bash open without having to rely on the Monkey King. As this unfolded, Sir Isaac Newton, Machiavelli, and the other scholars stared, mouths agape, at what was transpiring. Now they began to chatter with tones of indignation.

"Sir Isaac, something must be done," said Machiavelli.

"Yes, yes, I suppose it does," he responded, coming to his sense. "Everyone, stop them!"

Sir Isaac summoned a giant apple to fall from the sky on Achilles, but seeing that it was coming, the Monkey King leapt up and smashed it with his staff, disintegrating it into hundreds of flying apple pieces that landed as bits and chunks, not too different than apple sauce, upon the scholars. The scholars wiped the apple chunks off their fancy octagonal caps and robed shoulders and, after their moment of shock, flew back into action. Euclid and Pythagoras, the Giants of Geometry, drew shapes in the air—rectangles, triangles, and squares—that became real disks that they could command at will. With a twist of their hands, they turned the vertical shapes on their sides 90 degrees and sent them speeding towards Achilles. Sir Gawain used his shield to block the first few and then used his sword to cut down others; first with a slice to his left and then to his right, and then, spinning around backwards, sliced through the last.

Machiavelli was studying the situation and coordinated with the other scholars. He had Louis Pasteur, the Baron of Biology, summon germs from a petri dish that he held. They became larger and larger, until they were visible. At first, they just looked like balls and then they grew to be so large that their details could be made out. The germs were covered in evenly spaced rubber-like spikes protruding out of them, but instead of ending in a sharp point they became slightly wider and took on an almost spherical shape. There were hundreds of these germ balls and they continued growing, surpassing the height of a person. With the movement of his hand, Pasteur commanded the giant germs to roll with full force at Achilles, Gawain, and the Monkey King. The Monkey King swiped at one that was rolling at him, but its rubber spikes impeded the blow such that it was knocked away but the Monkey King was slowed down significantly, and the next giant germ ball was already on top of him, intertwining its sticky arms around his arms, legs, and torso and continuing to roll away with him attached. In the same way, Sir Gawain and Achilles were overcome and all three were rolled away from the gateway until all of the germ balls came to rest upon the three in a giant heap of giant germ balls.

With great effort, the smothered Monkey King yanked his hand free. He pulled a swath of hairs from his head and blew on them. Achilles, who happened to be trapped near the Monkey King, saw this and said, "If you are so great, Sir Monkey, you must have a better solution than grooming yourself." The hairs fluttered in the air and then drifted about whimsically until landing back on the Monkey King's face and the surrounding area.

"He's gone crazy," Achilles said. "Gawain, can you hear me? Sir Monkey has lost it!"

After a few more moments the hairs started to glow and become brighter and larger. They zipped through the air, escaping the heap of germ balls and shooting further out until they instantly became a dozen duplicates of the Monkey King. These doppelgangers swung their enlarged staffs like giant golf clubs back and forth, clearing the balls away. They then helped the three heroes to disentangle themselves from the last germ balls that they were stuck to.

All of this gave Machiavelli time to develop his plans and coordinate with the other scholars. When Achilles returned to his task of battering down the dome's door, he did not get

very far before he felt something tickling his skin. It was Albert Einstein, the Regent of Relativity, who had shrunk himself to the size of a photon and was indeed riding on a photon at an inconceivable speed as he wrapped a microscopic rope around Achilles. Einstein was in a different spacetime that was much faster than the spacetime of our current scene, such that he had plenty of time to complete his long journey as a photon tying a rope around Achilles about a thousand times. To Achilles it seemed almost instantaneous. One moment he was pounding a dent in the iron door and the next moment he was completely tied up and lying on the ground.

The Monkey King was of no help to Achilles, for he had been drawn into a fight with a slew of monsters created by Dmitri Mendeleev, the King of Chemistry. Each monster was an incarnation of an element from the Periodic Table. The gases, such as hydrogen, helium, and oxygen formed into freezing crystalline, humanoid bodies. The element monsters composed of crystalline noble gases glowed in neon light. These gas monsters shattered relatively quickly but also reformed quickly. Each metal monster could bend in different ways. The gold monster was soft and easy to knock aside but turned itself into extremely thin wire and wrapped itself around him, slowing the Monkey King down. The sodium monster almost completely crumbled before the Monkey King even touched it, but when his hand, wet with perspiration, did jab it, it exploded, knocking him off his feet. Mendeleev played out the fight like a chess game on a miniature Periodic Table he held in his hand. Although no individual monster was a match for the Monkey King, each one slowed him down, and together they successfully occupied him and kept him from freeing Achilles.

The Monkey King was left without his doppelgangers and it seemed no matter how many more he summoned from his hairs, they were quickly rendered useless, disintegrating from within. The General of Genetics, Gregor Mendel, teamed up with James Watson and Francis Crick, the Dukes of DNA, who had discovered a way of unraveling the duplicated DNA of the Monkey doppelgangers. They turned themselves microscopic through their magic microscopes, flew into a doppelganger's body, and gave a single tug on one of its double helix DNA strands, causing it to unravel into a Monkey hair and setting off a chain reaction that dissolved the Monkey doppelganger back into a single monkey hair.

Sir Gawain was also of no use to the tied-up Achilles, for Darwin, Freud, and Nietzsche had transformed themselves into a giant guerilla, a giant snake, and a giant vulture, respectively. It was a terrifying scene that Gawain beheld, not only in their ferocious and formidable appearance, but also in the psychological attacks they launched through their terrifying eyes. A wandering bard saw the scene and later composed this song:

Darwin's ape has eyes containing  
Scenes from past days now replaying:  
A red-faced man who needs restraining,  
A jealous heart on others preying.

*Who would do that? Who's that man  
Following the Devil's plan?  
See the face: "Oh no it's true:  
It belongs to none but you!*

Freud's reptilian eyes are showing  
Scenes of lustful glances yearning

For another's wife. They're growing  
In the disgrace they risk earning.

*Who would do that? Who's that man  
Following the Devil's plan?  
See the face: "Oh no it's true:  
It belongs to none but you!*

Nietzsche's vulture eyes reflecting  
Scenes of pompous ideas spouting  
From the know-it-all, respecting  
No one, even elders flouting.

*Who would do that? Who's that man  
Following the Devil's plan?  
See the face: "Oh no it's true:  
It belongs to none but you!*

Compared to his fellow Knights of the Round Table and to the knights throughout the generations of European knights, Sir Gawain had a very pure heart and had committed very few transgressions over the years, but what he saw in the eyes of the Darwin, Freud, and Nietzsche beasts before him seemed to amplify the worst in himself. Individual scenes from his past were replayed with terrifying intensity and exaggerated effects, inducing a debilitating sense of regret in Gawain. This particular method was engineered by the psychoanalytical powers of Freud.

Such unusual, mental attacks shook Gawain's confidence to the bone and sent him running away. He flew back to the mountains of Heaven, a far way off, and saw that they had not followed him. He landed on a small island of land floating in the mountain mists. He threw his sword into the ground and flung his shield down. He paced around the little island in the sky quite distraught. Everything looked grim. The mighty Monkey King didn't seem so mighty anymore, Achilles was completely demobilized, and he himself had never engaged in such a cowardly retreat. Add to this the fact that he had never journeyed beyond Camelot and its lands before, and it was no wonder that Sir Gawain was now feeling thoroughly out of his element.

Nonetheless, as his heart stopped pounding and his feet slowed down, Gawain realized without a doubt that, no matter how hard his heart might pound, he would have to go back and do what any self-respecting noble knight ought to do: fight to the death. Before departing the sky island, he knelt down and said a prayer to Saint Mary: "Holy Mary, Queen Mother of Heaven..." He proceeded to relate his troubles and request help in conquering his sins, serving his king, and obeying the commands of Heaven.

Saint Mary, glowing radiantly, decked in an exquisite, flowing robe of blue and with a majestic gold crown upon her head appeared and spoke: "Sir Gawain, have you forgotten who you are and what you carry with you? I have seen your foes and they are nothing before one who carries what you do."

Sir Gawain was stunned and speechless.

"Lift up your shield. Have you forgotten what is upon it?" said Saint Mary.

Sir Gawain lifted his shield and looked at the pentangle symbol that adorned it. It was a five-pointed star and the lines were interwoven so as to be continuous and unbroken.

“These demons you face have merely some fragments of human wisdom that they use to scare and intimidate you. They pick on a few insignificant mistakes you made in the past and combine it with their humanly wisdom to create something that looks frightening, but it’s really nothing. What is there to be afraid of? Does not your pentangle already carry the highest human wisdom beneath Heaven?” said Saint Mary.

Sir Gawain looked at the pentangle sincerely, but blankly.

“Ah, you have forgotten, indeed!” Saint Mary said. She glided down to the ground where she touched a corner of the pentangle and said “Generosity,” the letters of the word “Generosity” instantly lit up, for they had always been on the shield and were just now made visible and reactivated. “Fellowship.” The next word lit up as the first faded back into invisibility. Each corner shined brilliantly as the Saint touched it with her delicate hand: “Piety... Courtesy... Chastity.”

She said, “Scholars may talk and talk while standing upon the dirty heap of Earth but they never rise above these words. In the glorious setting of Heaven, you have even less to fear. Now—”

Her next words were cut off. It turns out that when Sir Gawain began his prayer with the words “Queen Mother of Heaven,” due to his particular location in the Three Realms, he had caught the ear of the Jade Emperor’s wife, who was also often called “Queen Mother of Heaven.” She also glowed radiantly and wore an intricate flowing gown of orange and gold, and a small tiara upon her head. The Queen Mother had flown there and arrived just after Saint Mary. She listened to the moving words from Saint Mary and now felt it was time to reveal herself. She said, “Goddess, may I add a few words of encouragement as well.”

Saint Mary said, “How lovely you are! By all means, please do.”

“What you, Sir Knight, may not know is that you have even less to fear than you think. Though you are far from your home in a strange part of Heaven and the times have changed, the traditional wisdom you carry with you is more powerful and profound than you realize. This pentangle that you think only comes from your home, connects directly to the Five Elements of ancient Chinese wisdom, which were inherited from previous human civilizations and use precisely, the same five-pointed star symbol. The Five Elements of Metal, Wood, Water, Fire, and Earth connect to the human body’s vital organs, the phases of human social development, and to the Universe. Additionally, these five virtues of a knight connect directly to the five Confucian virtues on the other side of the world. Generosity connects with the benevolence of Rén (仁),” and when she said the Chinese character’s name, she touched the shield and it lit up in the same location as the word “Generosity” previously lit up, but this time with the Chinese character. “Fellowship connects with the righteousness of Yì (義).” Again the character lit up. She went through all five with her delicate hand relighting each, “Piety connects with the proper rituals of Lǐ (禮), Courtesy with the wisdom of Zhì (智), and Chastity with the trustworthiness of Xìn (信). The traditional wisdom you carry with you shines brighter and stronger than any other human wisdom. Do not forget this!”

The two goddesses looked at each other, smiling and reading each other’s thoughts. Together they looked at the knight and said, “Now go, Sir Knight!”

## **Chapter VIII. Back to the Gateway**

Sir Gawain made his way back and found the scene just as he had left it, except that the Darwin Guerilla, the Freud Snake, and the Nietzsche Vulture were preparing to lay into the Monkey King. The knight landed by the gateway and ran the sharp edge of his sword along the body of Achilles, cutting away the invisible threads that had tied him up. The Nietzsche Vulture caught sight of him and signaled to his two fellow monsters that Gawain had returned.

This time, Sir Gawain's shield glowed majestically as he flew at his foes. The words of Generosity, Fellowship, Piety, Courtesy, and Chastity glowed and then were intensified by the Chinese characters Rén, Yì, Lǐ, Zhì, Xìn (仁義禮智信). He shined his shield at the beasts, blinding their eyes momentarily and stunning them. He immediately stabbed the Darwin Guerilla in its side. After this, he found, with very little effort, that these three monsters were actually quite timid and awkward in real combat. Soon, they vanished and all that was left were the three scholars shivering under the table and hoping that Sir Gawain wouldn't punish them.

Next, Gawain spotted Mendeleev orchestrating the Periodic Table of Elements in a relentless attack on the Monkey King. While Mendeleev held the table in one hand and manipulated its pieces with the other, Gawain ran up to him and knocked the table to the ground with a brush of his hand. The little game pieces flew everywhere. The elemental monsters dissolved and the Monkey King could finally rest.

Sir Gawain and the Monkey King set about tying up and blindfolding all 90 scholars. They all pretended to not know where the key to the gateway was, so Achilles decided to work on getting it open. Looking around, he had an idea. He decided to pick up the Monkey King's staff, which he knew had great powers. However, the staff was too heavy. He had seen the Monkey King use the staff in incredible ways, including lengthening and shortening it at will. Achilles suddenly had the idea that his spear might have similar capabilities. This wasn't such a stupid idea. Since this was taking place in Heaven, it was possible that the mere idea of something could cause it to happen. Achilles looked at his spear and said to it, "Enlarge." Sure enough, the spear grew larger. Not quite as large as he hoped but there was a noticeable difference. "For an elephant," he commanded and the spear enlarged far more to the size of one that might attack an elephant. "For a cyclops," he commanded and it enlarged even more. He decided to charge at the gateway with his spear and yell, "For a Titan!" just before he rammed the spear into it. The Titans were primordial Greek gods who were enormous in size, so he was sure the spear would become large but he was also worried that he wouldn't be able to wield it well if he made it too large too soon. So, he ran and shouted, drawing the attention of the Monkey King and Sir Gawain, who were just finishing up their tying up and blindfolding of the scholars.

Achilles strategy worked better than he thought. Not only was the gateway's door stripped away, but he tore off about a third of the dome, sending the door and two giant chunks of the dome hurtling downward toward Earth.

"No! What have you done?" said the Monkey King, who ran to where the gateway was. He was too late. The three mashed-up pieces of the dome careened down to the surface of Earth. The Monkey King watched closely with his supernatural vision. He saw the three pieces hit one after another, although to the human beings on Earth the impact of the pieces was all invisible. The time between the effects of the impacts of the three pieces, crossing over, from one dimension and spacetime to another, seemed to human beings to be months apart.

In May of that particular year around the turn of millennium, 1996, a human being named Timothy Leary was hit and killed by the first piece. In June of the same year, Thomas Kuhn. The



last piece, which was flatter and encountered some wind resistance, landed on Carl Sagan in December, killing him. Yet, these three scholars died within a few seconds of each other in the Monkey King's spacetime. Were these three human beings random victims? Of course not. These three human scholars had all worked to expand humankind's knowledge and understanding of the Universe and human beings within it. They achieved this to some extent, However, their ability to broaden human beings' understandings were severely limited and only scratched a tiny portion of the Universe's Truth. They had attacked traditional spiritual beliefs and traditional religions and failed to expand scientific thought to a great enough extent, ultimately adding to the moral decline of human civilization. Thus, they were already fated for death and their lifespans had already been extended. However, to the Monkey King, they were just three human beings who were killed.

"Our mission is to save sentient beings!" said the Monkey King to Achilles. "How can we do that if you are killing them?"

Before the conversation could progress any further, the iron Gateway to the Human Realm immediately regenerated itself and the three heroes were again locked out.

After a minute of silence, Gawain said, "What shall we do now, Sir Monkey?"

"Scholars... scholars..." said the Monkey King looking at the tied up, blindfolded mass of them.

"You should have listened to us," said Machiavelli.

"Let's gag them," said Achilles.

"Good idea," said Gawain.

While they were gagging the scholars, the Monkey King said, "I know what to do. I shall visit the greatest scholar of them all... Laozi! You two wait here."

The Monkey King flew at top speed through the Universe to the alchemy workshop of Laozi, the Old Master of Taoism. It was filled with strange potions and diagrams. There were medicinal herbs and elixirs of immortality; there were octagonal charts of the divinatory eight trigrams and the yin-yang symbol. There were scrolls revealing the secrets of everything from plants to the human body to different states of society to the Universe. The Monkey King showed himself in and began looking over the shoulder of Laozi, who was in the middle of taking a concoction out of his furnace.

"Can I help you, Monkey?" said Laozi.

The Monkey King explained the situation to Laozi, who shook his head and stroked his beard in agreement of the difficulty of the situation. After a long pause, he finally said, "Dào kě dào, fēicháng dào. (道可道, 非常道)," which might be translated as,

"The way on which you can make your way,  
is not the everlasting Way."

The Monkey King found this enigmatic piece of wisdom, which he had already heard many times before, especially confusing on this occasion.

He scratched his head, his arm, and his back, meanwhile saying to himself, "If the gateway is 'the way on which you can make your way' then it is not 'the everlasting Way.' And, if it is not 'the everlasting Way' then it doesn't matter how we get through since the method we are forced to use will not have a lasting effect... So, I think we could just sign some of those stupid contracts and break out of the shackles as circumstances permit later."

Laozi nodded his head and said, “Rúzi kě jiào yě! (孺子可教也!),” which roughly translates to “This kid is teachable!”

“Thank you, Master Laozi!” said the Monkey King. “Now then, let’s say we agree to sign some of these scholars’ contracts, can you give me some magic pills that can return to us our Heavenly powers once we are down in the Human Realm?”

Laozi raised his eyebrow, “How many do you need?”

“Hmmm, maybe a thousand, assuming one lasts one day and we split them up among the three of us,” said the Monkey King.

“I will give you one,” Laozi replied.

“I’m afraid that just isn’t going to do it,” the Monkey King said and placed the end of his staff on the table that Laozi was using.

“Do you want me to stick you in my furnace again!” warned Laozi.

Both of their serious faces soon cracked into laughing. Laozi had indeed put the Monkey King into his furnace long ago, when he was far more rambunctious, and burned his eyes red.

After their laugh, Laozi said, “Okay, I’ll give you three and that’s it.”

Laozi opened one of the many metal dishes in the workshop and pulled out three pills, which he plopped into the Monkey King’s outstretched hand. The Monkey King looked closely at the red pills. Using his supernatural vision, he could tell that they were not solid colored at all, but were made up of many dark stripes. Looking still closer, he could see that the stripes were actually words repeating over and over again. The words were Zhuǎn Fǎlún (轉法輪), meaning “Turning the Law Wheel.” They repeated over and over again, line after line, pill after pill.

“These should do the trick,” said Laozi. “Good luck to you and goodbye!”

The Monkey King put the pills in a special pouch in a special pocket of his robe, said his thanks and goodbye and headed back to the Gateway to the Human Realm, satisfied that he, Gawain, and Achilles would not be completely helpless in the Human Realm. After returning, he negotiated with the tied-up scholars, wrangling them down to 72 contracts and 72 shackles instead of the 81 originally required. They were able to have Machiavelli’s contract tossed out, as well as some other less significant ones. The three heroes did a lot of signing and had many shackles placed on their bodies, each disappearing after it was sealed shut. Finally, Sir Isaac Newton lifted the mat in front of the Gateway to the Human Realm and took out the key, allowing our three heroes to proceed on their quest.

A poet was passing by and recorded the momentous occasion in this sonnet:

It is a noble scene on time’s vast sea  
When you step off the pier from Heaven’s shore:  
The noxious wind from Earth blows savagely,  
But onward into empty space you soar.  
The moon’s the last good port that you must pass;  
The shimmering stars are friends who wave goodbye;  
Your dreams of home are vibrant nebula gas  
Mountains disappearing from the eye.  
A single thought, “To save all sentient beings,”  
Keeps you heading toward the briny waves  
That soak and weigh down Gods, thus making weaklings

Who forget just how a God behaves.  
At last, there's only aching flesh onshore,  
An inkling you once passed through Heaven's door.