

A Pitcher of Water

A Suggestion for China on How to Bring About Democracy with Order

In the time before the tellers of tales found their voices, there lived prosperous landholder named Summer Wind. Summer Wind had eight sons, and he loved them all equally well. To train them for manhood, he sent out his servants to find tutors who would teach his sons the ways of the body, the spirit, and the mind. The servants sent many men to Summer Wind's house so he could choose from the best among them. Quickly Summer Wind selected a man to teach his sons the ways of fist and sword. The man he chose possessed thick arms and a thick neck, and owned a splendid sword that marked him as a prosperous warrior. When Summer Wind spoke with this man, Summer Wind's muscles tingled with energy. Surely, Summer Wind thought, this is an omen of a good teacher for my sons. Quickly he selected another to show his son the airs and arts. He chose a tiny man with long fingers who carried his brushes in an enameled case decorated with an intricate pattern of delicate hues. When Summer Wind spoke with this man, his heart softened. Surely, Summer Wind thought, this is an omen of a good teacher for my sons. Yet Summer Wind did not find that any of the men whom the servants sent to his door were fit to teach his sons the ways of the mind. One came with long, curling fingernails and wearing heavy robes. Another brought scrolls in a cart pulled by two oxen. A third wore a stern scowl and wielded a heavy staff. Each in turn made Summer Wind's belly feel empty. Surely, Summer Wind thought, this is an omen of a bad teacher for my sons.

Summer Wind sent his servants out again to seek someone to teach his sons the ways of the mind, but the men who came to his door all left Summer Wind's belly feeling empty. "Where," he asked his servants, "is there a man who is equal to the task of training my sons' minds? For if I train their bodies and their spirits and do not also train their minds, they will not be fit to manage my property when I am dead, or raise descendents for me who will honor me."

His eldest servant spoke forth. "In my travels, I have hear rumor that in the province across the wide river there dwells a great teacher called Master Deep Eyes. Master Deep Eyes was counselor to Waving Hair, the enemy of your father. Master Deep Eyes is no longer in the employ of the Waving Hair family. Perhaps he can be persuaded to come."

When Summer Wind heard Master Deep Eyes's name, his belly felt full and happy. Surely, he thought, this is an omen of a good teacher for my son.

"It is true that Waving Hair quarreled with my father over a small estate that is rightfully the property of my family. This quarrel remains unsettled, but I do not bear any enmity for Waving Hair's son. Waving Hair led a prosperous house. His prosperity greatly exceeds my own. If my sons learn from Master Deep Eyes, they may be as prosperous as Waving Hair's sons are. Go to the province across the wide river, and ask Master Deep Eyes to come to my house. Tell him I will give him the best room in my house to be his school."

So the servant traveled seven days and crossed the wide river to speak with Master Deep Eyes. In another seven days he returned to Summer Wind's house alone.

“Master Deep Eyes humbly thanks you for your kind offer of the best room in your house, but he says he will not come. His widowed mother is ill, and he will not leave her until she returns to the side of his father.”

When Summer Wind heard this report, his belly felt full and happy. Surely, he thought, this is a very good omen of a teacher for my sons.

“Go back across the wide river,” he told his servant, “and take with you this coffer of silver. Instruct Master Deep Eyes to use this silver to hire some women to look after his mother. Then lead Master Deep Eyes back here in all honor to tutor my sons. When he arrives he will have another such coffer for his own use.”

So the servant traveled seven days and crossed the wide river to speak with Master Deep Eyes. In another seven days he returned to Summer Wind’s house alone and with the coffer of silver under his arm.

“Master Deep Eyes humbly thanks you for your kind offer of the silver, but he says he will not come. His widowed mother is dying, and he will not leave her until she returns to the side of his father.”

Summer Wind sent away his servants and went into his garden to consider what he should do. His belly told him that Master Deep Eyes should be the tutor for his sons. Yet it was witless, not wise, to turn down a fine situation and great riches to wait upon an old woman. Summer Wind decided that Master Deep Eyes might not wish to serve in the house of his former master’s enemy.

“I shall cross the wide river myself,” Summer Wind decided. “I will tell Master Deep Eyes that no enmity exists between my house and that of his former master. Perhaps that will persuade him to come.”

So Summer Wind set off in a sedan chair with forty attendants and traveled for seven days and crossed the wide river. His servant brought him to Master Deep Eyes’s door in a poor and crowded corner of the city. The door led to a room so small that Summer Wind’s train could not enter, but only Summer Wind himself. Summer Wind found Master Deep Eyes kneeling on the floor beside an ancient woman whose face and hair were white and knotted. The woman rested quietly as Master Deep Eyes held her hand in both his own. When Summer Wind entered, Master Deep Eyes rose to receive him. The moment Master Deep Eyes set aside his mother’s hand, the ancient woman began to groan in pain.

Master Deep Eyes wore a simple, dun robe of coarse fiber. His frame was fragile and his fingernails were short. His store of scrolls stood in a frame with straps that Master Deep Eyes could carry upon his back. Yet when Summer Wind saw this man, his belly leapt with happiness, and he knew he must have no other tutor for his sons.

Master Deep Eyes bowed deeply to Summer Wind and offered him a meal of greeting. They ate brown rice and steamed cabbage from a clay bowl on short table covered only in a mat of woven

straw. The food had no spice or savor at all, and very little salt. While they ate, Master Deep Eyes's mother groaned in pain.

"Surely, Master Deep Eyes," Summer Wind said when they finished the meal, "this is not a life for a man of your wisdom. You live in a small, dark room in a poor and crowded corner of the city with poor food and dun clothes. Come with me to tutor my sons, and you will have a wide and airy room in my great house. You will eat tasty food and wear soft silks. Do not worry about the quarrels that existed between my father and your former master. They are nothing to my heart."

Master Deep Eyes rose from the table and cleaned the rice bowl without answering. He knelt beside his ancient mother and signaled for Summer Wind to do the same. Summer Wind felt ashamed to kneel beside a woman, but such was his hunger for the good will of the master that he did so. He saw that when Master Deep Eyes lifted his mother's hand, immediately her groans ceased and the lines of pain washed off her face.

"Summer Wind is a great and noble man," Master Deep Eyes said quietly, "and I am honored to be visited by him and petitioned so ardently. But he must see that my mother is dying. I cannot leave her until she returns to the side of my father."

"But this is just an old woman!" Summer Wind said. "She is dying and you cannot stop death from taking her. Let some women tend her. I have eight young sons who need the wisdom of a teacher. They will be great some day. If you impart your wisdom to my sons, they may do great things with it and honor your name down generations to come."

Master Deep Eyes delicately set down his ancient mother's hand, and immediately creases of pain returned to her face, and she groaned. The moment he took up her hand again, her groans ceased and the lines of pain washed off her face.

"My mother is dying and I cannot stop death from taking her. But while I hold her hand, I ease her pain. When I came into the world, she bore three days of great pain for my sake. When I was a child, she would starve herself so that I had enough food to eat while I studied with a master. For me she bruised her hands and strained her arms with housework. I will not ask her to bear pain again while I have the power to relieve it. I cannot leave her until she returns to the side of my father."

Summer Wind bowed his head before Master Deep Eyes's wisdom. "Your mother is dying, and you cannot leave her until she returns to the side of your father. But Master Deep Eyes, I will have no other tutor than you for my sons. When your mother has returned to the side of your father, then come to my house and teach my sons."

"When my mother returns to the side of my father, it would please me serve a wise and powerful master with many sons to teach. Summer Wind has many sons to teach. He comes in a sedan chair with a large train to show me his power. But I do not know if he is wise."

"I am not a man of learning," Summer Wind said. "How can I show you that I am wise?"

“Learning is but one part of wisdom.” Master Deep Eyes said. “The better part of wisdom comes from a true heart. A man with a true heart would put off his satin robe, send his train home, and wait in a small, dark room in a poor and crowded corner of the city for the death of an ancient woman.”

Summer Wind rose with indignation. He was a man of property with a house to run. He could not wait upon the death of an ancient woman. He left Master Deep Eyes’s house with anger in his jaw and set his foot into the sedan chair. But his belly shook with dread. Surely, he thought, this is an omen that I must have no other teacher for my sons.

He sent his train home, took off his fine satin robes, and donned a robe of coarse dun. For forty days he stayed with Master Deep Eyes in his small, dark home in the poor and crowded corner of the city. He ate brown rice and steamed vegetables with no spice or savor and very little salt. At night he slept on a thin mat of straw. By day he knelt beside Master Deep Eyes while the master gently held the hand of his ancient mother. In forty days, Summer Wind’s frame became lean and his fingernails short.

On the morning of the forty-first day, Master Deep Eyes woke Summer Wind. “My mother has returned to the side of my father. I will now go with you to your home.”

Summer Wind had eight sons, and he loved them all equally well. Each had special gifts and learned best from one tutor or another. Summer Wind’s forth son was named Wind Walker. Wind Walker was Master Deep Eyes’s best student. When Master Deep Eyes spoke, Wind Walker would drink every word as a man took water in the desert. When Master Deep Eyes set out a scroll, Wind Walker would eat each word with his eyes, as a man takes food in a famine. The words of Master Deep Eyes and Master Deep Eyes’s scrolls became the pith of Wind Walker’s mind as food and drink build the pith of a man’s body. Master Deep Eyes also showed him the graces of good living. Wind Walker studied his every point and gesture as a new carpenter studies an old pagoda. And the movements of Master Deep Eyes and Master Deep Eyes’s poses shaped Wind Walker’s frame as a carpenter shapes his buildings.

When the light in Summer Wind’s eyes began to fade, he asked Master Deep Eyes how he should divide his property and his great house among his sons so that they would not quarrel with each other, for he loved them all equally well, and he wanted many descendents who would prosper and bring honor to him. Master Deep Eyes did not answer but instead went for a walk by the singing stream. There he walked for three days, without returning to Summer Wind’s house. On the fourth day, he came back from the singing stream, bowed before Summer Wind, and spoke thus:

“You have eight honorable sons whom you love equally well. You must marry each of your sons to a virtuous woman, give each an eighth part of your property, and build him a comfortable house upon that property. Leave instruction that when you die, your great house will be burnt to the ground. You are further to charge your sons each to designate, in secret, one of his brothers as his heir. Should the son die before his own sons come of age, his secret brother shall marry

with his wife, instruct his sons, dower his daughters, and inherit his property. So shall the bothers take particular care of each other, competing in kindness not in avarice.”

Tears came into Summer Wind’s dimming eyes, for he saw the wisdom of Master Deep Eyes’s plan. He married all his sons to virtuous women, divided his property in equal parts among them, and built each a comfortable house upon that property. Then he called together his eight sons, who he loved equally well, and told them they should designate one of their brothers as a secret heir.

In time the light went out of Summer Wind’s eyes. Master Deep Eyes himself saw that the great house burned to the ground. Then he visited each brother in turn to see that he was comfortably bestowed with his wife in his own house. He bid each in turn farewell, for Master Deep Eyes intended to return to the province across the wide river.

Master Deep Eyes came last to the house of Wind Walker, his best student. “Please, Master Deep Eyes, do not go!” Wind Walker pleaded. “Now that I am a man with a wife and property and a house, I need your wisdom more than ever. Please stay and advise me.”

Master Deep Eyes set his hand upon Wind Walker’s head. “A man who has a well-trained mind is his own best advisor. As long as you recall the lessons I taught you, you have the best advice I can give, no matter which bank of the wide river I walk upon.”

“But Master Deep Eyes, you have taught me that the troubles of men are more difficult than the mind of a boy can know. I learned your wisdom with the mind of a boy. As a man, I may meet troubles that exceed the wisdom I have.”

Master Deep Eyes reached deep into the folds of his robe and pulled out a lovely opal stone. He set it into Wind Walker’s hand and closed his fingers around it. “If you should ever come to a time when your troubles exceed the wisdom I have given you, send this opal stone back to me and I will come. But you may only use this summons once and then never more.”

Wind Walker admired the lovely opal stone, and its warm glow brought him great comfort. Master Deep Eyes went back across the wide river, and Wind Walker set the lovely stone on the right hand of his father’s altar so that he might remember his tutor when he honored his father.

As the years passed, each of the brothers prospered in his own way. Their wives all bore them plump babies. Those brothers who had learned the most from the tutor of fist and sword went off to distant wars and brought back great wealth, which they shared with the others in hopes of being designated their secret heir. The brothers all used these gifts to expand their property, so the brothers’ estates became renown in the province for their size. Those who had learned the most from the tutor of airs and arts went on long journeys and brought back beautiful paintings, vases, and tapestries, which they shared with the others in hopes of being designated their secret heir. The brothers all used these gifts to decorate their houses, so the brothers’ homes became renown in the province for their beauty. Wind Walker did not leave his province. Instead of sending gifts to the houses of his brothers, with each new moon he would strap on his sandals

and visit the homes of his brothers' families, each in its proper turn. He taught the children of the house how to read and copy scrolls and gave them the wisdom that Master Deep Eyes had given him. He instructed the wife of the house in the graces of good living, as Master Deep Eyes had taught him. The brothers all welcomed Wind Walker's instruction, so the brothers' homes became renown in the province for their harmony. And in his travels, Wind Walker came to love all of his nephews and nieces as he loved his own children, and to respect all his sisters-in-law as he respected his own wife. These things he did for the joy it brought to his heart, not with any hope of being designated their secret heir.

The family of Summer Wind became the most admired in the province for its wealth, its beauty, and its harmony.

There came a time of great strife among the provinces. The brothers of fist and sword went off to fight the wars, and one by one they were killed in them. In these lawless times, the brothers of arts and letters were waylaid and robbed in their travels, and one by one murdered by the roadside. When the will of each brother was read out in its turn, each one of them had designated Wind Walker as his secret heir. So Wind Walker became the husband to eight virtuous wives and the owner of all his father's property, increased in wealth by the victories of the brothers of fist and sword, and enriched in beauty by the brothers of arts and letters.

With each new moon, Wind Walker would strap on his sandals and visit the homes of his honored brother's families each in its proper turn. While he sojourned in each house, he would instruct the children in the scrolls and wisdom, cultivate the graces of good living in the family, direct the affairs of the property, discipline any unruly servants, settle disputes among the tenants, and please the wife in the night. In time, each of Wind Walker's eight wives bore eight sons. And he loved them all equally well. Whenever Wind Walker stayed under the roof of one of his families, he found peace within its walls.

When Wind Walker burned an offering on his father's altar, he would gaze at his master's lovely opal stone. It pleased his eye and made his heart sing. In his thoughts, humbly thanked Master Deep Eyes for the wisdom that allowed him to run his eight families in peace and prosperity. He remembered Master Deep Eyes's words upon his day of leaving. "A man who has a well trained mind is his own best advisor."

"Truly, Master Deep Eyes, you have left me a well-trained mind. I will not have to send this lovely opal stone back to you but will keep it to please my eye and make my heart sing all the days of my life."

Happy peace reigned in Wind Walker's heart.

Upon the high morning of a new moon, Wind Walker strapped on his sandals and walked toward the house of the of his first honored brother. When afternoon came, a mighty storm crowded the sky, letting fall white rocks from heaven that bit him painfully. Wind Walker sheltered under a tree, but soon heaven's fire began to strike the earth and heaven's lion roared so loudly that it

hurt Wind Walker's ears. "It is not wise to remain outside when the heavens are so angry," he considered. "My own house is too far behind me, and the house of my first honored brother is too far ahead. Yet just across this paddy is the house of my fifth honored brother. I will seek shelter there and enjoy the peace of this home until the storm passes."

As Wind Walker crossed the dike between the paddies, he heard a great bedlam that sounded above even the roar of heaven's lion. In the light of heaven's fire, he saw the servants of the house sitting idly under the eaves. Through the windows, he saw his children running and shouting and fighting with each other. Beyond the door, he saw that his wife's hair was not coiled gracefully nor her clothing straight and proper. This is not the house of peace he had left when the moon was fuller.

A mighty anger crowded Wind Walker's heart. When he arrived under the eaves, he beat the shiftless servants with his walking stick so that it stuck them like heaven's fire, and he sent them back to their chores. He entered the house of his fifth honored brother. His wife and children fell silent and still. Some of their faces paled with fear. Some of their faces glowed with shame. Wind Walker read from the scroll of their faces that this disorder was common while he did not live with them. He let fall his walking stick upon his naughty children so that it bit them like white rocks from heaven. He roared at his wife like heaven's lion.

The sky above the paddies grew placid while Wind Walker's house still felt the storm of his anger. He stayed within their walls until the next eastern sun. He beat the servants for every fault he found in their work. He reminded each of his children in turn of their shame and of their duty to obey him. He scolded his wife for abandoning the graces of good living and did not please her in the night.

When Wind Walker left his house in the light of the eastern sun, he did not feel peace in his heart. He felt ashamed for the disorder he had found in his own family. He also felt shame for the bitter anger that he had allowed into his heart in order to correct them. He wondered whether he could love his honored fifth brother's wife and those children as well as the others.

Wind Walker arrived at his first honored brother's house to find industry among the servants, order among the children, and grace in his wife. Yet a worm had entered Wind Walker's heart to gnaw at his happy peace. His wife, children, and servants knew very well that he would arrive after the new moon set, for he always came to them in that moon. He wondered whether the servants were still industrious, the children still orderly, and his wife still graceful in the other moons. "For," he thought, "they may put on industry, order, and grace as a man puts on his finest robe to please the eye when he knows a guest is coming. When the guest leaves, he closes his fine robe again into the dark chest where no eye sees. So the house may wear its peace as a robe to please my eye but close it into a dark chest when I leave." The worm in his heart did not let him sleep peacefully in the night.

While Wind Walker stayed in his first honored brother's house, he instructed the children in the scrolls and wisdom, cultivated the graces of good living in the family, directed the affairs of the property, disciplined an unruly servant, settled two disputes among the tenants, and pleased the

wife in the night. The happy peace of this house quieted the worm in his heart but did not rid him of it. And when the moon changed, he strapped on his sandals to go to his next house.

As he walked the path away from his house, he saw a man whose sons farmed one of the fields on his property. The man sat in the sunshine with the peace of old age upon his face.

Wind Walker stopped his steps and spoke to the old man. "Can a man of many years speak a truth to his lord which his lord may not wish to hear?"

The old man rose slowly and bowed with the stiffness of age. "A man of many years will do what he must to honor his fathers, for soon he will join their company. My father raised his sons to honor truth above other virtues. In honoring truth I am honoring my father."

This answer pleased Wind Walker. "Then I charge you, as you honor your father, to answer me with truth. For many years I have always come to the house of my first honored brother's family after the new moon sets, and ever I have found happy peace in the walls of my house. Does happy peace remain in my house under other moons?"

The old man bent forward. "The dark moon of my lord's arrival is the warmest moon. Brighter moons shine more coldly."

The worm awoke in Wind Walker's heart. "You have honored your father with truth. Now I would have you honor your lord with a service. My own house sits upon the side of a hill that the south wind visits first and that watches the setting sun. By the front gate of this house stands a stone jar that one of my honored brothers brought from a distant provinces. This jar is painted with a white peony. Whenever a bright moon shines coldly on my house here, send your youngest son to my house with a single pebble. Charge him to drop the pebble into the stone jar with the white peony."

The old man bend again before Wind Walker.

Wind Walker proceeded on to his second honored brother's house and found industry, order, and grace within. He instructed the children in the scrolls and wisdom, cultivated the graces of good living in the family, directed the affairs of the property, disciplined two unruly servants, settled disputes among his tenants, and pleased his wife in the night. But as he left the estate, he charged another old farmer to send a son to put a pebble in the stone jar with the picture of the white peony whenever he learned of trouble in his house.

And so he did as he went from house to house.

"For," he told himself as he walked, "it may be that these troubles are really not so many. If it is a small matter to put right a few unhappy moments, the worm will leave my heart and I will sleep well in the night.

In the last light of the waning moon, Wind Walker left the house of his seventh honored brother and returned to his house on the side of a hill that the south wind visits first and that watches the

setting sun. Before he entered the house, he stopped at the gate and reached into the stone jar with the picture of the white peony. He found within it a handful of pebbles. He took out all the pebbles, wrapped them in a cloth, and tucked them into his sleeve.

The next morning, he knelt before the altar of his honored father. He untied the package of pebbles and laid it on the altar. "My honored father," he prayed, "your wisdom and the cruel chances of fate have set me over the houses of all your sons. Although I have striven to ensure harmony in your sons' houses, I see that I have not succeeded as you would have wished. Please tell me what I am to do?"

He lit a large offering to his father and sat back on his heels, watching the flames and smoke, and listening for his father's voice. The offering burned to char and the smoke disappeared into the eaves, but Wind Walker did not hear his father's voice. The worm in his heart moved into his belly and begot more worms. They churned his belly to pain.

Beside the pile of gray pebbles, Wind Walker's eye lighted on the lovely opal stone that Master Deep Eyes had given him. He lifted it and remembered Master Deep Eyes's promise to return from across the wide river on its summons to advise him. "Surely Master Deep Eyes's wisdom will banish the worm so that I can sleep at night." But the lovely opal stone pleased his eye and made his heart sing. He did not wish to send it away. He remembered Master Deep Eyes's word to him: "As long as you recall the lessons I taught you, you have the best advice I can give, no matter which bank of the wide river I walk upon."

Wind Walker set the lovely opal stone back in its place. "I remember every word of every lesson Master Deep Eyes taught me. I already have the best advice he can give. I will meditate on his words until I find the ones that will guide me in this trouble. Then I may keep the lovely opal stone that pleases my eye and makes my heart sing."

He wrapped the pebbles in the cloth, put them into his sleeve, and went to the garden. He sat upon the low bench and remembered all the lessons that Master Deep Eyes taught him. Many wise sayings entered his thoughts, but none had the power to still the worms clawing his belly.

Wind Walker watched the shadows walk slowly through his garden. On many other mornings, the walk of the shadows through his garden had brought peace to his heart, but on this morning, the worms in his belly made their gentle journey seem tedious.

In time, the worms in his belly also made the package of pebbles in his sleeve feel heavy. He took out the package and scattered the pebbles on the garden path. The pebbles danced on the path a moment then stopped. When they stopped, they disappeared to his eye.

Wind Walker sat up straight with a new thought. "Ever have I been the shadow walking through the garden. My families could put on the fine robe of peace only in one moon. I will be instead like the dancing pebbles. If my arrival is not known, they will never be able to close the fine robe in the chest for fear that they would not be well dressed for my arrival."

The worms in Wind Walker's belly fell still, and he slept well in the night.

With each new moon, Wind Walker set out to the houses of his honored brothers in a different order. He found that trip was longer than when he wound the same path from one to the next. The paths were more difficult, since they were not straightened and smoothed by his earlier travels. Often he would arrive at the house of his honored brother with his feet galled by his sandal straps, his legs scratched by brambles, frame weak from walking, and his belly aching with hunger. Often he found the house in discord on his arrival. He would beat the servants, punish the children, and scold the wife until the house returned to industry, order, and grace. When harmony settled over the house, he would not remain to enjoy it, but would hurry on to the next house.

Each time he returned to the house on the side of the hill that the south wind visits first and that watches the sunset, he found fewer pebbles in the vase with the peony.

After a year being the dancing pebbles, Wind Walker knelt before his father's altar and lit an offering. He bent low and prayed. "My honored father, your wisdom and the cruel chances of fate have set me over the houses of all your sons. I have striven to be worthy of this trust. My feet are hard where the straps of my sandals have bitten them. My legs are covered with scars where the brambles have torn them. My frame has grown lean with walking. Yet this pile of pebbles is smaller than last year. I do not mind the calluses and scars or the leanness of my frame if it brings harmony to the houses of my honored brothers. But, my honored father, punishing my children and scolding my wives has put a rock in my belly, for despite their discord and lack of grace, I love them all equally well. While the rock is in my belly, I have no peace. Yet this rock I will also bear to be worthy of the trust that my honored brothers placed in me."

He picked up the lovely opal stone. Master Deep Eyes had not given him the wisdom he followed to bring order to his families. Following his own wisdom left him with a rock in his belly and pebbles in his jar. Yet by following his own, he could keep the lovely opal stone that pleased his eye and made his heart sing. He set it back on the altar and enjoyed its beauty.

In the next year, the pile of pebbles that waited for Wind Walker in the jar with the peony did not get smaller. Sometimes it got larger. Wind Walker moved as quickly as he could between the houses of his honored brothers, and his frame became leaner still. He punished his children and scolded his wives more harshly, and the rock in his belly grew heavier still.

In time, the oldest of Wind Walker's sons sought to marry. Wind Walker found them virtuous wives, built them homes and gave them land. When he went about his journey of the moon, he also stopped at the houses of his married sons to ensure they did their duties and that their wives practiced the graces of good living. In time, his sons also begot sons. A new one arrived with almost every moon. When they grew old enough, Wind Walker would also instruct his grandchildren and to see that they kept order in his sons' houses. And he charged an old farmer on each of his sons' properties to send a pebble to the jar with the peony whenever discord came to the house of his son.

Each time Wind Walker returned home, he found more and more pebbles in the jar with the peony. He could not travel fast enough nor punish his sons enough nor scold his wives enough nor discipline his grandchildren enough to keep the number of pebbles in the jar from growing with each year. The rock in Wind Walker's belly grew heavier, and often the worms came there to eat as well. Wind Walker did not know peace nor sleep well in the night.

Often when he went to his father's altar to make an offering, he picked up the lovely opal stone and wondered whether he should summon his old master. But the sight of it pleased his eye and made his heart sing. Each time he set it down again, for he did not wish to send away such beauty.

There came a day, however, when Wind Walker returned from his travels to find more pebbles in the jar than three handfuls could remove. He went to his father's altar and burned a large offering, but then removed the opal stone from the place it had rested for a generation. He put it into the hand of his most trusted servant and instructed him thus.

“Go across the wide river and search for my old master, Master Deep Eyes. If he still draws breath, give him this stone along with my most warm and gracious greeting. Ask him to return to the house of his humble and grateful student Wind Walker. Bring him in a sedan chair, for if he lives, he will be a venerable, ancient man who has lived long beyond his natural allotment of years.”

As he watched the servant go down the road, his heart cried for the loss of his lovely opal stone.

When the new moon set, Wind Walker did not walk the path to the houses of his honored brothers and their sons, for he did not wish to be away when Master Deep Eyes arrived. He remained instead at the house that the south wind visits first and that watches the setting sun. Each day he watched the jar with the white peony. Every day, some children came to his gate and dropped a pebble or two or three into the jar. Each time he heard a pebble fall into the jar, he looked up the road that led to the great river and longed for the sight of a sedan chair bringing his old master.

At last, under the moon that sets at midday, Wind Walker spotted the sedan chair on the road that led to the great river. He instructed his wife to prepare a fine meal then ran out to meet the chair at the gate. Wind Walker intended to bow before his old master as befits a humble student, but when Master Deep Eyes emerged from the sedan chair, he wrapped Wind Walker in a warm embrace and would not let him bow at all. In the embrace, Wind Walker could tell that Master Deep Eyes had grown frail with living long beyond his natural allotment of years but that no rock nor worms lived in his belly. Wind Walker felt happy in the thought that soon he would have no rock nor worms himself.

After three days of rest and welcome, Wind Walker sat with Master Deep Eyes on the low bench in the garden. Wind Walker spoke of the death of all his honorable brothers in the wars and the mandate they had given him from heaven to care for their families. He described his efforts to guide his wives and children to harmony. He told the tale of the storm that had showed him that

the satin robe of peace often stayed in the chest while he was away. He spoke of his years of being the dancing pebbles, of what he had suffered in trying to do his duty to his honorable brothers. He told of the rock in his belly and the worms that gnawed him, and that he did not sleep well in the night. He told him finally about the stone jar with the white peony and the pebbles that counted his shame.

Master Deep Eyes sat erect with his arms folded into the sleeves of his robe as Wind Walker spoke, letting his eyes rest upon the garden. Only when Wind Walker spoke of the pebbles of shame did Master Deep Eyes stir and meet his eye.

“My most beloved student, Wind Walker, you must not feel shame for this trouble. When your honorable father asked my advice on how to divide his property among his eight sons, whom he loved equally well, I did not foresee that the burden of all eight households would fall upon one man. The wisdom I gave you in your youth was to help you run one home and one family. You have governed your houses with a calm and noble heart. You have raised many descendents to your honorable father. The family of Summer Wind became the most admired in the province for its wealth and its beauty. But this strong and prosperous line cannot be governed as though it were a man’s own family. You have eight wives and each wife has eight sons and now some of your sons have sons, and new ones arrive with almost every moon.

“You may love them all equally well, for love is water from a spring. The spring can fill all the cups that reach towards it. But you cannot rule them equally well, for ruling is water in a pitcher. In a small house, a pitcher may fill every cup. But in a great house, the pitcher cannot fill all the cups that reach towards it. You are a strong man, and you have carried a heavy pitcher, but it not large enough to satisfy so many wives and children and grandchildren. And so, my beloved student, these pebbles do not count your shame. They count the glories of your houses that have brought many problems.”

Master Deep Eyes’s words killed all the worms that lived in Wind Walker’s belly. Yet still the rock weighed heavy in it.

“But if the pitcher I have does not contain enough water to fill all the cups, am I to let some of my wives or sons or grandchildren go thirsty? How can I do this, for yet I love them all equally well?”

“When the light was fading from your father’s eyes, he asked me to advise him on how he should divide his property among his sons so they would prosper and bring honor to him. Your father followed my advice, and his house has become strong and prosperous. I have often advised the family of Waving Hair. Waving Hair’s family has been strong and prosperous for many generations. It is now headed by Waving Hair’s grandson, Copper Hair. If you would find peace for you house, now that it has grown strong and prosperous, you must rule it like Copper Hair.”

“But Waving Hair quarreled with my grandfather over a small estate that is rightfully the property of my family. This quarrel yet remains unsettled.”

“What you say is true, but this does not matter. You may learn what Copper Hair knows about ruling his family without ceding your claim to the property.”

“I have heard that Copper Hair’s family does not cherish the graces of good living as I do.”

“Copper Hair’s family cherishes different graces than you do, but they are good graces nonetheless. You may learn what Copper Hair knows about ruling his family without copying his graces.”

“I have heard that Copper Hair’s house does not have harmony.”

“Copper Hair’s house has great activity, as befits a large and prosperous house. Great activity creates many different harmonies. The ear that learned to hear one harmony only may think that many different harmonies create discord. But this is not so. The prosperity of Copper Hair’s house is the richness of many harmonies blending together. The prosperity of Copper Hair’s house would not be possible if this blending of harmonies created discord. You may learn what Copper Hair knows about ruling his family without bringing discord to your family.”

“I have heard that my neighbor on the plain that the north wind visits first tried to copy the ways of Copper Hair’s house, but it brought only discord. He does not try any more.”

“I have visited the house on the plain that the north wind visits first. The property is very rich. The head of this family and his favorite sons are very rich. But he does not love all his sons equally well. The sons and grandsons he does not love well are poor and unhappy. Harmony does not reign in his family, only quiet. And, my most beloved student Wind Walker, you have spoken of the rock that lives in your belly because you must use anger and blows to bring harmony to your family. I have looked in the eyes of the head of this family on the plain that the north wind visits first. He has a boulder in his belly. After the sun sets, he rests himself upon a thick, goose-down mattress under a quilted, satin cover, but he never sleeps well in the night. One day, war will arise among his descendants, and even a mountain in his belly will not stop it.”

A wind of unhappiness blew from Wind Walker’s chest. “My most revered teacher Master Deep Eyes, from the time I was a boy playing on the floor of my father’s house, I have heard reports of Waving Hair’s house that make me fear to follow such an example. Is there no other way to rule a great house in prosperity and harmony?”

Master Deep Eyes fell quiet. He watched the shadows walk across the garden at a turtle’s pace before he spoke again.

“There may be another way, noble Wind Walker, but I do not know it. I have lived long beyond my natural allotment of years. In the years of my long life, I have watched many houses rise to greatness but then fall to discord because the head of the family did not rule them well. I have heard tales from the times of our grandfathers’ grandfathers, and they repeat the same story. Copper Hair’s house is great, prosperous, and harmonious, and so it has been for many generations. I cannot promise you that if you follow Copper Hair’s example, your house will

also be so. But you have sent my lovely opal stone back to me in quest of my best wisdom, and this is my best wisdom.”

Another wind of unhappiness blew from Wind Walker’s chest. “Then you must teach me how Copper Hair rules his house.”

Master Deep Eyes bowed assent. “Go now into your house and make your school room ready. Then sit upon the student’s cushion and empty your mind. I will walk by the singing stream to compose my thoughts. When I return, I will sit on the master’s stool and teach you as I did in days of your father.”

Wind Walker quickly prepared the school room and sat upon the student’s cushion to wait for Master Deep Eyes. The cushion did not comfort him as it did when he was a boy. All day he shifted his seat to try to ease the pain of it. Master Deep Eyes did not return from the singing stream before the stars took their seats in the heavens.

Wind Walker did not sleep well in the night and rose from bed before the stars had left their seats in the heavens. He went to the schoolroom and took his place upon the student’s cushion. He learned to sit still upon the student’s cushion, but his thoughts would not sit still. Instead, unhappy thought warred in his mind. He recalled all the troubles he had had with his sons and his wives, and his servants. His problems raged and roared as the sun crossed the sky. Wind Walker was angry that Master Deep Eyes did not come, for he wanted his problems to end. Master Deep Eyes did not return from the singing stream before the stars took their seats in the heavens.

Wind Walker slept in the night and rose as the eastern sun chased the stars from their seats in the heavens. He went to the school room and took his place upon the student’s cushion. His problems did not war in his mind, but his thoughts did not sit still. Instead, happy thoughts danced in his mind. He imagined the joy that would come to him when Master Deep Eyes and taught him how to rule his great house in prosperity and harmony, the respect he would gain from those who knew him, and how all his wives, sons, and grandchildren would honor him for what he had done. These joys whirled and leapt as the sun crossed the sky. Wind Walker was anxious for Master Deep Eyes to come, for he wanted to share the joy he felt. Master Deep Eyes did not return from the singing stream before the stars took their seats in the heavens.

Wind Walker slept well in the night and rose after the sun had leapt from the eastern hills. He went to the school room and took his place upon the student’s cushion. No thoughts came into his mind. He sat in peace upon the student’s cushion, content with the sound of his own breathing and the breeze that sighed through the window. Master Deep Eyes came into the room quietly and took his seat on the master’s stool. He sat erect and still, with his arms folded into the sleeves of his robe. When he saw his master, Wind Walker felt neither anger nor joy. Instead, he opened his mind wide to catch Master Deep Eyes’s teachings.

“You cannot carry a pitcher of water great enough to satisfy eight wives and eight times eight sons and grandchildren that arrive with each moon. You must carry only what pitcher your strength can bear. This water will not satisfy eight wives and eight times eight sons and

grandchildren that arrive with each moon. You must show your wives the path to the spring so that they can bring water to their own sons. You must carefully teach them the path you have walked and insist that they walk that path only, for your own feet have worn it smooth, and you have learned how to avoid its dangers. Your wives will complain that the spring is too far for them to talk, but you must not hear them. You know that the water in this spring is wholesome. If they provide this water to their sons, their bellies will not revolt. When you visit your wives, observe that they are walking the path you showed them. As they learn the path to the spring, you should bring them less and less water in your own pitcher.”

Wind Walker closed his eyes and let Master Deep Eyes’s words seep through his mind. A light behind his forehead lightened the rock in his belly. Yet when the master’s words had come to rest in the deep puddles of his mind, the rock grew heavier again.

“My wise Master Deep Eyes, in the full strength of my manhood, I have labored to provide my family this water you talk of, and I have not succeeded as well as my duty demands. You advise me to shift this burden onto the shoulders of my wives, who do not have my manly strength. They may not be able to bear the burden of a pitcher large enough to supply their eight sons and the grandchildren that arrive with almost every moon. I love all my sons equally well. I would rather be crushed into the very earth under my burdens than hear my sons howl in want while I have the strength to provide.”

“Listen carefully, my dear student Wind Walker, to the sound of the pebbles falling into the stone jar with the white peony. The wise ear hears woe in soft sounds as well as loud. Your house already suffers from this thirst. Your wives do not have your manly strength, so you must stand behind them with their own, yet they must be made to use what strength they have and not depend upon yours. As you love your sons equally well, your duty to them is to ensure that their mothers do their duty. When the time comes for you to close your eyes on scenes of earth and join your honored father and brothers in heaven, you will know that your wives can provide what your sons need.

“Once your wives have learned the path to the spring, they must show their sons the same path so that they can bring water to the grandchildren that arrive with almost every moon. Your wives must carefully teach their sons the path they have walked and insist that your sons walk that path only, for their feet have worn it smooth, and they have learned how to avoid its dangers. Your sons will complain that the spring is too far for them to talk, but your wives must not hear them. So your sons will always have water from a spring that is wholesome. If they provide their own sons with its water, their bellies will not revolt. Your wives must observe that their sons are walking the path that you showed them. As your sons learn the path to the spring, your wives should bring them less and less water in their own pitchers. When the time comes for your wives to close their eyes on scenes of earth and join your honored brothers in heaven, they will know that their sons can provide what your grandchildren need.

“The duty of your sons to their own children is not the same. Your sons will have what manly strength they need to supply all their children from a pitcher filled at the same spring. Yet the path to that spring is long, and your great family cannot prosper if these grandchildren that arrive with almost every moon must spend their days walking this long path. Your sons must tell your

grandchildren to find wholesome springs for themselves. Your grandchildren must seek through the little places on your great estate for hidden springs. They must learn the taste of wholesome water and foul. Perhaps as they learn, their bellies will revolt, but your sons will be at hand to restore them with wholesome water. Perhaps as they follow little trails, they will stumble on rocks and bruise their flesh. Perhaps they will encounter a biting fly or a thorny bush. But your sons will be at hand to treat their sores and soothe their fears. Children's sores heal quickly, and gentle soothing will restore their courage. While they explore new paths to new springs, they will also learn to see dangers and discover how to avoid them. It is to learn these lessons that the children are sent forth. Their fathers' manly strength can provide them all the wholesome water they need. But your sons cannot teach them these lessons because they have only walked the path your wives taught them. Your grandchildren must learn these lessons while they are young and daring, while their fathers can bring them wholesome water, while their bruises and fears mend quickly.

“When your grandchildren have learned the taste of wholesome water and know where the dangers lie, they must make their own little paths to the best springs. They must carry water in their own tiny pitchers. These tiny pitchers will reward their effort, but they will not satisfy all their own thirst. Your sons must give them some wholesome water while they are children, but less and less as they grow. In time these children will learn to find good springs. In time they will straighten and broaden the path to the best springs. As their strength grows, they will be able to carry pitchers that satisfy all their own thirst.

“When your grandchildren beget children of their own, their duty will be to teach them how to find water for themselves. They must teach their own children to love the taste of wholesome water. They must show them the cliffs and hollows where good springs may be found. They must show them where biting flies like to swarm and how to step around thorny bushes. They must demonstrate how to build easy paths to any new springs they find.

“And so my dear student Wind Walker, if you would have harmony in your family, you must teach your grandchildren to rule themselves. Your duty is only to rule your eight wives. This does not ask too much. Your eight wives' duty is to rule their eight sons. This also does not ask too much. Your sons' duty is to help their own children on the path to ruling themselves, beginning with little matters while they are little. This also does not ask too much. You and your wives and sons must rule so as to maintain harmony while the children learn, but you must insist that they learn. Your grandchildren must be allowed to fail in little things so they learn the taste of failure and come to love success.

“Let each son enforce harmony among his own children so that the song of each family is harmonious. And let each of your wives enforce harmony among her own sons, so the song of each of house is harmonious. And you must enforce harmony among your eight families so that the song of your clan is harmonious.

“This is the harmony of Copper Hair's house. It did not emerge in a day or a year or a generation. It has grown slowly with roots from a time that memory does not reach. The younger generations must always explore ways to rule themselves better, while the older

generations must always insist that these ways blend harmoniously. Many generations will close their eyes on scenes of earth before your clan knows this broad harmony.

“You cannot command this kind of harmony to appear. Your neighbor on the plain that the north wind visits first commanded his family to copy the ways of Copper Hair’s house. His son’s and grandsons did not know how to blend their harmonies, so only discord followed. Because he failed, the richness of that great house will remain with only the beloved sons, while most of his descendents will live in want. And his house will never be truly great or prosperous, despite its rich property.

“If you truly love all your sons equally well, do not wait until the jar with the white peony overflows with pebbles. Then you will have lost the respect of your wives and sons, and they will not obey you. Your wives will spit at each other, and your sons will war against their brothers of a different mother. Your neighbors will see your weakness and rob your properties. And when you close your eyes upon scenes of earth and go to sit among your honored brothers, they will frown upon you. As you honor your father and your brothers, you owe them this duty.”

Wind Walker again closed his eyes and let Master Deep Eyes’s words seep through his mind. His head blazed with light. The rock left his belly. Yet when the master’s words had come to rest in the deep puddles of his mind, his belly tightened. He understood that Master Deep Eyes’s advice would not be easy to follow. He must teach his wives a duty he had not prepared them for. They must teach their sons a duty they did not fully understand. His sons must set their children at a task they did not know how to do themselves, a task that could bring these little ones to dangers that none of them could predict. Yet to receive this wisdom, he had sent away the lovely opal stone. It would never again please his eye or make his heart sing.

Suddenly Wind Walker understood that Master Deep Eyes had given him the lovely opal stone to see what value Wind Walker would place upon his wisdom. Wind Walker had sent back the opal stone out of love for his family. The wisdom of Master Deep Eyes was expensive, yet as Wind Walker loved his family, the wisdom bought by the lovely opal stone was precious far beyond its price.

With this insight, Wind Walker opened his eyes. Master Deep Eyes sat erect and still upon the master’s stool with his arms folded into the sleeves of his robe. But the light had left Master Deep Eyes’s eyes. His mouth hung open, and a dim frost tinted his skin.

Wind Walker called his servants. They carefully laid Master Deep Eyes upon a pallet covered with a purple satin. Wind Walker gently touched Master Deep Eyes’s eyes to close them and said, “Now I close the eyes that looked at the world only to learn wisdom.” Wind Walker gently pushed Master Deep Eyes’s mouth closed and said, “Now I close the mouth that spoke to the world only to teach truth.” Wind Walker gently unfolded Master Deep Eyes’s arms from the sleeves of his robe. He saw that Master Deep Eyes grasped the opal stone in his hand. He took it into his own hand and felt its fading warmth. Its beauty still pleased his eye and made his heart sign. Yet Wind Walker set the opal stone again into Master Deep Eyes’s hand.

“My most revered Master Deep Eyes,” Wind Walker said, “you lived long beyond your natural allotment of years while I admired this lovely opal stone more than I desired your wisdom. Upon this stone, I swear to heed your wisdom until my own eyes close upon scenes of earth.”

And Wind Walker folded Master Deep Eyes’s cold fingers around the lovely opal stone.