

Chapter 1

The First Encounter

Nature has its King, for no human being can dictate the four seasons or the timing of life and death. Even still, it seems people never learn from history that they should be satisfied with their blessings. Instead, we continuously long for many things. But we can learn many things from nature...

Wen-chang and Wen-qu¹ are a pair of stars that once become human. While they were in their human form, they did a lot of good things on Earth. They helped the poor, got people out of trouble, relieved people's worries, and forgave those who did wrong. In today's world of sadness and worry and misery, it would be a blessing for these stars to return and save the world from unhappiness....

Of all of the holiday seasons, Christmas is perhaps the most recognized, a time when many people worldwide like to celebrate and enjoy the holiday season and its festivities. Phuket, Thailand is a good place to celebrate the holidays while soaking up a lot of glorious sunshine on a plethora of beautiful beaches.

¹ Wen-chang (文昌) and Wen-qu (文曲) are a pair of stars. In Chinese myths, they symbolize intelligence and distinction in arts.

In Kata Noi, a small beach on the southwestern side of Phuket, there were once only a food stall and some randomly scattered beach chairs. Visitors to Kata Noi enjoyed the quietness and nature. On the morning of Boxing Day, many people were still sleeping after the party the previous night, but there were a few people on the beach, including two monks talking together.

Monks are common in Thailand due to the presence of so many who practice Buddhism. But one of the two monks on the beach that day was special among his cohorts – a famous monk by the name of “Zi-shan Long-wang².” He was highly respected by Thais, and people around the region often came to him for advice and blessings.

The monk talking to Zi-shan Long-wang was kind and solemn, and while he looked as if he were eighty years old, he was, in fact, 120, the senior teacher of the Zi-shan Long-wang. He was the “Master Monk of Phuket³,” very popular in the 1920s, and during his time, he helped a lot of people, performed miracles, and saved people from disasters. He disappeared from the public around sixty years ago, and it was rumored that he was hiding in a cave to enhance his skills. No one knew where he was or if he was even still living.

But on the beach that day, Zi-shan Long-wang sighed and said, “Look! What a beautiful day with breezes, nice sunshine, and a clear sky! Who

² Zi-shan Long-wang (紫山龍王) is one of the famous monks in Thailand.

³ Master Monk of Phuket (布吉神僧) is one of the famous monks in Thailand.

would even think that a disaster is coming soon! Master, do you think there's a way we can avoid this disaster?"

The Master said, "No! No human being can prevent the disaster from happening. After all, what goes in must come out⁴." The Master said sadly, "We can't change fate! We can only follow our destiny!" Then he became calm and started to put his hands together to pray.

Zi-shan Long-wang couldn't help asking, "If the Master doesn't come to the world to help people escape from the disaster, may I humbly ask why you hid for sixty years to improve your skills? And now, here you are!"

After a deep breath, the Master said, "It's because of fate... something that I learned sixty years ago."

Zi-shan Long-wang knew that the Master had something to say from his memories, so he kept quiet and respectfully waited for him to speak.

The Master looked out far across the way, even further than sea line. He said, "Sixty years passed by so quickly. Right before he died, my teacher gave me two Buddhist relics⁵ and told me that I have to give these to two people." While talking, the Master took out two crystal

⁴ "What goes in must come out" is 如是因, 如是果 in Chinese

⁵ Buddhist relics (舍利子)

clear Buddhist relics about the size of red grapes. Just when the Master was going to hand them over to Zi-shan Long-wang, the sun shined on them, and bright, colorful beams shot out from the two relics. Zi-shan Long-wang stared at the relics and instantly felt serenity and happiness in his heart.

According to ancient Sanskrit writings, Buddhists believe that if they practice Buddhism and keep the rules, they will be free from evil and eventually achieve perfection. When these faithful Buddhists pass away, they become Buddhist relics. There are two types of Buddhist relics. One type is called “Intact Body” Buddhist relics, which come from the bodies of senior monks. For Intact Body relics, their bodies are not cremated and remain unchanged because of their seniority in Buddhism. The second type is “Relics of a Cremated Body.” These come from the cremated bodies of monks who have passed away. There are different colors of Buddhist relics, including “hair relics” (black), “blood relics” (red), and “bone relics” (white). Some variations also include blue, transparent, and multi-color. Of these, the most common relic is white.

The Master looked at the Buddhist relics and said calmly, “When I received these two Buddhist relics, my heart instantly felt calmness and my mind became very clear.” Zi-shan Long-wang agreed with the Master and nodded his head.

The Master continued, “These two Buddhist relics are sources of wisdom – the result of hard work by monks. My teacher told me to

hand these two relics over to two Asian youngsters whom I would meet sixty years later.” The Master continued, “At that moment, I had doubts and asked my teacher to explain why. I asked my teacher, ‘Having these two Buddhist relics is like meeting the Buddha, so why not put these two relics in the temple and let people in our country look at them and pray?’” The Master admitted this doubt with a tinge of regret, laughing at his own stupidity.

The Master said, “My teacher replied, ‘Buddhism is so powerful and saves human beings.’ I was so shameful after asking that stupid question. I should have known that everyone should be treated equally. This is the reason why sixty years ago I went to the cave and hid away there to practice my skills in Buddhism. My teacher told me that sixty years later, there would be a major disaster around this area, and many would die or be injured. As the saying goes, ‘Prosperity comes after disaster.’⁶ This is when the *Wen-chang* and *Wen-qu* will meet. It is called the ***Chang Qu Reunion***⁷.”

Zi-shan Long-wang was suddenly glad and very excited, and with a trembling voice, he said, “*Chang Qu Reunion* is something you won’t see in a thousand years. It symbolizes the rise of Asia into another civilization, and this *Chang Qu Reunion* implies that China will step into another era and the Dragon from Asia will wake up! No wonder there will be this amazing natural phenomena.”

⁶ “Prosperity comes after disaster” is 殃盡乃昌 in Chinese

⁷ *Chang Qu Reunion* (昌曲會) is the encounter of the Chang star and the Qu star.

“Yes, these two Buddhist relics have to be given to these two born-again *Wen-chang* and *Wen-qu* stars. It is our hope that they can use these two relics with wisdom and kindness and can lead China and other areas around to prosperity and peace, relieving people from sadness. This has been my hope for the past sixty years, and it will be accomplished now.” The Master smiled and started to recite scripture with the Zi-shan Long-wang.

The sun started to rise slowly above the water level. There were more people on the beach than before, bustling about because of the Christmas holidays.

In front of the food kiosk, a Chinese boy around sixteen or seventeen was sitting on a beach chair reading a magazine. This young man was very handsome, and his face looked like a piece of jade. His forehead was high, and his teeth were nice. His young eyes were strong, and in his face, there was a noticeable special quality about him. He was wearing Hawaiian-style shorts and looked very handsome and inviting. He was very attractive, with a great build, and most girls would certainly find him irresistible. He was reading a copy of the American journal, *Physical Review*, and in spite of the difficult subject matter, he was speed reading the text at an unbelievable pace, flipping through pages every one to two minutes as if it were nothing more than a comic book. Occasionally, he reached for a snack from the small round table next to him – a crispy walnut, which was probably a favorite of his.

While the young man was reading quietly, there was a loud sound. He looked up from his journal to find a young Chinese teenager around his age dressed in light blue swimwear, running very hard back and forth warning the people on the beach to run away. This young man was strong in his build, and it was obvious somehow that he was very talented. He looked handsome, and his eyes and eyebrows were nice. He was a special breed.

The young man sitting on the beach chair wondered what was going on and why the other boy was shouting, and he found his answer in the panicked shouts of the crowd. "Tsunami! Let's run for our lives!"

In a flash, the young man sitting on the beach chair put down his magazine and screamed, "It's really you! Good grief, I am coming!" He ran toward the other young man and looked at the sea as well. He saw that the water had retreated too far away; the seabed was lowered and could be seen, and some of the oblivious tourists were not even aware that there was a disaster coming and were still playing on the beach with their families and friends. After some thoughtful consideration, the young man gathered, "Now, we don't feel any shakes on the Earth, so it must be a tsunami. Luckily, there is enough time for everyone to run away from this disaster."

Instantly, he bumped into the other young man and said, "Brother Pang, I'm Brother Zhu-ge. How long ago did you discover that the tsunami was coming?"

“About two minutes ago!” They had never met before, but Pang knew that this was Brother Zhu-ge. *You! You really picked a great time to show up!!*

At that moment, there was a very loud sound from the sky, and finally everyone took notice and became afraid from the deafening noise.

Brother Zhu-ge said, “I’m afraid that there’re only several minutes left. Let’s get the tourists out of here first.”

Pang looked around and raised his eyebrows. “Right, no more time! I will get the tourists off the beach, and you can guide them the shortest route to the hilltop.” Instantly, the two just left the spot and ran quickly in two different directions.

Brother Zhu-ge already figured out the way to the hilltop, and in order to calm down the tourists running away from the disaster, he spoke in both English and Thai. “Please stay calm and don’t be scared! You can run along this shortcut to the hilltop, and then you will be safe from the disaster. Remember to help each other and don’t push! God will always bless you and keep you safe.” Religion is mankind’s belief, and we all look for God’s guidance and help when we are facing difficulties. Brother Zhu-ge knew this and used it to calm the terrified tourists.

Brother Zhu-ge guided people to the shortcut to the hilltop, all while ensuring that the surroundings were safe. Suddenly, he saw two monks reciting Buddhist scripture underneath a tree. They didn’t seem to take

any notice of the commotion and were not moving toward the shortcut like the others. Hurriedly, he ran up to them and spoke, “Master, tsunami is coming! Follow me quickly and run toward the hilltop!” Brother Zhu-ge frantically pointed in the direction of the hilltop.

The monks were acting like there was no disaster at all, and this made Brother Zhu-ge very anxious. They finally opened their eyes and looked at Brother Zhu-ge. They didn’t care to run for their lives but only stared at Brother Zhu-ge. He was desperately trying to get the monks to a safe place.

Brother Zhu-ge saw that they were not prepared to run for their lives, so he repeated his warnings and pleas to them. This time, the Master replied to him with a steady voice, “Good!” The monks stayed put and refused to move a muscle.

Though Brother Zhu-ge heard the reply from the monk, he didn’t know what that meant and doubted if these monks understood what was really happening. *What did he mean, “Good!”?* Brother Zhu-ge was puzzled.

All the tourists on the beach heard from the young men about the disaster, and they all ran toward the hilltop. At this critical moment, these two monks were not listening to Brother Zhu-ge, and the young man got impatient. “Run fast!” He held the two monks, one on the left and one on the right, and off he went to the hilltop.

Brother Pang's duty was almost complete, and he was ready to run to the hilltop himself. Suddenly, he saw shadows down in the washroom and noticed a Thai couple, who seemed to be looking for something important.

When he got near them, he heard their cries. "Baby! Where are you? Tsunami is coming. Come out quickly!" The woman's face was drenched in tears, and the man was soaked with sweat.

Brother Pang held them and asked, "Are you looking for someone?"

The Thai lady screamed loudly, "I lost my dear son! What do we do? What do I do? Where is he!"

Brother Pang asked, "How old is your son? What is he wearing?"

The Thai man replied nervously, "Three. No, wait, he just turned four. He's wearing, uh, he's wearing blue. Yes, light blue with small teddy bears. He's in his swimming trunks. Can you help us?"

"Sure! You can go with the others to the hilltop. I'll find your son."

"No! If I can't find my son, I'm not going anywhere!" screamed the mother, who was very determined. How could a mother run for safety while her child was still in danger? She couldn't leave.

The husband had the same standpoint as his wife and said, "Right!

Young man, you better run for your life! I don't want to get you into trouble. We're his parents. It's our job to protect him, even if we have to die trying."

Time was running short, but Brother Pang tried his best to convince the parents to leave it to him. "I guarantee that I'll find your son. I won first place in the American Short Distance Tournament. I'd have absolutely no problem holding onto your boy and running for our lives. But if you don't get out of here now, you might not make it to safety in time, and your son will be an orphan. He'll be unlucky for his whole life. I beg you, please let me find him while you get to safety."

The Thai couple listened carefully, but it was a difficult choice to make. There was so much uncertainty and so much at risk, and they couldn't decide what to do. At this moment, someone spoke loudly from the back. "I can guarantee that this young man can save your child!" said Zi-shan Long-wang, followed by Brother Zhu-ge and the other monk. The Thai couple acted as if some god had descended from the heavens when they saw Zi-shan Long-wang. They instantly put together their hands and bowed toward him. Then, they asked if what he said was true. He replied, "Yes, 100 percent true!"

The Thai couple then looked at the young man with cautious, pleading eyes. Brother Pang said, "I am very sure about this. I can do it! You should run for your lives now and wait at the hilltop for the good news." Quickly, he turned to Brother Zhu-ge and said, "Please take care of the things here." Then, he ran for the search at an unbelievably

fast pace. Brother Zhu-ge took the terrified parents and any other stragglers to the safety of the hilltop.

Several minutes later, all the tourists had already gone to the hilltop as instructed by Brother Zhu-ge, save two – Brother Pang and the missing boy. Everyone prayed that their God would bring them to safety. They watched and waited, huddling together in hope.

A distance from the hilltop, there was another beach area still filled with tourists. They were too far away from the safe hilltop, and the tourists could only look down at them helplessly. Sadly, it was too far away to yell down to them or to go and get them. “Look! They’re coming!” shouted someone, pointing as everyone gasped.

The calm sea suddenly got rough, and huge waves rolled over the water like a roaring animal looking for its prey. The Thai couple were heartbroken, for they had seen no sign of Brother Pang and their missing son. Driven by sheer desperation, they senselessly cried, “Baby, we are coming to rescue you!” They tried to run toward the bottom of the hill, but luckily Brother Zhu-ge was there to restrain them from doing something foolish. The other tourists helped hold them back as the mother cried out, “Let me free! My son... I need to save my son!”

The man also cried and knelt down on the ground, “My God! It’s over! It’s over!”

The two monks tried to calm the couple down. “Please relax. I assure

you that this young man won't fail. He will return your kid safely."

Brother Zhu-ge said confidently, "Right! I believe in Brother Pang! Can you not see that two renowned monks guarantee his safe return? We would not try to fool you! You don't need to worry. Let's wait patiently here!"

Just at this moment, a woman screamed, and everyone turned to look toward the beach. "Look! Are they coming?" she wailed.

On the beach was a shadow running toward the hilltop. It was Brother Pang, and in his hands he was holding a young child in blue swimming trunks. He was running unbelievably fast, making his way up the hill as if it were nothing at all.

"Baby! Baby!" screamed the elated Thai couple. The boy's small hand held tightly to a piece of ice cream cone, and he was eating happily as if there were no disaster at all. Brother Pang's trot was so fast that it had caused him to smear ice cream all over his little face, but he was happy nevertheless, licking his lips with a big grin. When he heard his parents, he waved his little hand and said, "Daddy, Mommy, this ice cream is very yummy!" He had no idea that right behind them, gigantic waves were ominously rolling.

Brother Pang did not slow down, even for a second. Unlike the child, he knew that there was a huge wave behind him, threatening to pour over him and the boy and take them out to sea. Everyone on the

hilltop saw the wave, too, and began to worry. It seemed to be sucking Brother Pang into the water, and the outcome looked grim. They started to scream, “God, please run, run!” Some women began to cry, and others prayed.

On the distant beach, there was only silence. It was now covered with water, and there was no sign of life. It was heartbreaking, but faced with the wrath of nature, human beings become so tiny and helpless. Life is humble and susceptible for misfortune.

At this moment, the huge wave was already at Brother Pang’s heels, and everyone wondered, *How can they escape the watery death?* Waves crashed violently against his legs. Everyone at the hilltop knew that the two would be killed by the huge wave soon, but there was nothing they could do to help. They felt so lost and sad watching Brother Pang and the boy meet their doom.

“Baby! Sorry that your dad and mom can’t help you. We can’t rescue you, and we got this young man into trouble. We should die today for our sins.” The Thai parents cried out loud, blaming themselves for leaving their son behind and thereby dragging Brother Pang to his death.

The onlookers were very upset. Some were crying, and others shouted in anger to the sky, “They only need one second and they will be safe with us! Why are you so cruel!”

“He saved our lives, but he can’t save his own!” an onlooker screamed about Brother Pang.

“Unless God helps, these two are sure to die!” cried another.

“No... wait! Look! What’s that?” A look of utter shock came over the faces of several of the onlookers as they pointed to Brother Pang and screamed. Brother Pang used his hand to hold onto a piece of a tree trunk. He leveraged himself and raised his body around two to three meters high, landed on the ground, and floated up again.

Everyone was speechless. They couldn’t believe their eyes. How could a person jump so high, so far and at the same time hold a small child in his hand? It was a miracle! Everyone cheered, “Now he’s saved! Go young man, go! Go!”

Brother Pang jumped several times, and they were soon away from the tumultuous waves. They escaped death several times, and just as the waves and headed in the direction of the hilltop, it was as if they grew too tired and retreated back into the sea. Brother Pang and the child stumbled up the hilltop and sat down to rest. The tourists who had seen the whole treacherous event unfold were still dumbfounded, many of them soaked with nervous sweat. When they realized Brother Pang and the boy were safe and sound, they clapped their hands and excitedly shouted, “Yes! Good job! You guys escaped! Thank God!”

Everyone hugged Brother Pang and the boy and complimented Brother

Pang's brave performance. The kid's parents were so excited; it was better than winning the lottery. They thanked Brother Pang over and over again and held their son in their hands very tightly, petting him and kissing his sticky chocolate face. The boy only said, "Daddy and Mommy, is chocolate ice cream on my face very yummy? It'll be good to have another one!" Everyone started to laugh at the boy's naïve joy.

"Young fellow," said the boy's father, "you almost lost your life to save my son. I can't express my gratitude to you in words, but thank you very much!"

Brother Pang smiled and said, "We should help each other. Please, don't mind it."

"You are right! We should learn from this as well," said the father. "Young fellow, where did my son go? Where did you find him?"

"Well, there aren't too many hiding places on this beach besides the changing room and the snack stall. Since you were looking in the changing room and couldn't find him, I could only guess that your son must be in the snack stall, which is a popular place for kids." Brother Pang laughed. "I found the kid right in front of the ice cream fridge, crying because he couldn't open it. I opened the fridge and got one ice cream for him, then said to him, 'Run quickly! Tsunami is coming!' He answered, 'Let's run! Why wait?' So I carried him and ran toward the hilltop."

The father sighed and said kindly, “So this whole thing started because of his greed for snacks?”

Brother Pang replied, “Kids are satisfied when they have snacks, but adults are never satisfied with what they have. That’s why Jesus Christ loves children and He said ‘Let them come to me’!”

Brother Zhu-ge came to Brother Pang, smiled, and raised his hand. “Give me five!” Brother Pang, somehow reserved, gently looked at this clever and passionate young man. He raised his hand and hit Brother Zhu-ge’s hand in return. Brother Zhu-ge said instantly, “Yes!” The two held their hands together and then introduced themselves to each other.

“My name is Pang Wu (龐武). People called me Phoenix (鳳舞). Glad to meet you!”

“Same to you. My name is Zhu-ge Fei (諸葛飛). People called me Dragon (飛龍).” The two young men started laughing.

The Master said suddenly, “Dragon, Phoenix⁸ (龍鳳)? Good!”

Suddenly, the tsunami came again with the sound of a train, together with the huge waves. There was nothing calm about it as the waves overtook the beach in a seemingly never ending attack. They damaged

⁸ *Dragon - Phoenix* (龍鳳) have Chinese meanings of auspiciousness, high virtue, grace, mercy, excellence and harmony.

everything on the beach and tore the hearts of everyone.

The Master murmured, “What’s present in mornings can be absent in the evenings. The world can change in a flash. It comes; it comes just like the nature. In a flash can be another life.” Everyone sighed and felt that all they could do now was wait.

The huge waves continued for around an hour, then reduced to small ones, and the sea water started receding. Dragon and Phoenix led the tourists to the way out.

After the tsunami had wreaked havoc, the beaches were left destroyed and desolate. What were just recently beautiful beaches where tourists celebrated their holidays were now large garbage dumps piled with debris, garbage, and even dead bodies strewn about and tossed up into the trees. Although people just wanted to depart from the place, they followed the instructions of Dragon and Phoenix and helped others when they could.

At last, the rescue team came. Dragon and Phoenix told them what had happened and let them follow up with the injured. Then, they led the tourist out of the place so that the rescue team could concentrate on the injured. There rescue team captain said, “How could someone save so many people in such a short time and at the same time arrange such a clean up effort? What kind of people are these two young guys?” No one could give him an answer.

After many changes, they finally reached some kind of transportation, which was already filled with people. All of them were so grateful to Dragon and Phoenix, who had saved them from a disaster. Before they left, everyone thanked the young men several times.

After the entourage had cleared out a bit, the two monks came in front of the two young men and held their hands. “The greater the power, the greater the responsibility! These are holy things from our religion. They have enormous power and can help you out of dangerous situations. Please keep them safely with you.” The two monks smiled and left before the two young men even had a chance to speak. They only looked at the two monks and bowed to their shadows. They opened their hands that the monks had held and discovered the Buddhist relics, bright and shining. When they saw the relics, they felt good in their hearts and seemed to understand the meaning of everything. A great sense of clarity overcame them. “The *ren* and *du*⁹ channels are open now”; the two started to understand.

After a while, the young men smiled. Dragon, the more active of the two, said, “Let’s go back to our hotel and settle our things, then meet up for a chat, okay? I live in Banyan Tree Phuket. Where do you stay?”

Phoenix, the gentler, nodded his head, smiled, and said, “Seems we can’t avoid being together! I live in the same hotel as you, my friend!”

⁹ In Acupuncture of Chinese Medicine, Ren (任) and du (督) or ren-du (任督二脈) are two extraordinary vessels in human body as fields of energy.

The two started laughing and left the place.

Sample Chapters

Chapter 2

Birds of a Feather

Banyan Tree Phuket was a six-star hotel that provided an excellent living environment and facilities. With good reason, it was ranked as one of the top resorts in Thailand, considered Number Two in Asia according to the *Condé Nast Traveler Twentieth Annual Readers' Choice Awards*.

Phoenix lived in Pool Villa, while Dragon stayed in Lagoon Pool Villa. The surroundings were calm and peaceful. Each villa was equipped with a private pool with traditional Thai lodgings, as well as modern facilities – the hotel was well worth they \$1,000 a night!

The two met at the Banyan Café for drinks. Both ordered espresso, famous at the Banyan. It tasted great with caramel and smelled good. While having this espresso, Phoenix devoured several almond cookies, which were his absolute favorite.

Dragon said, “The airport is temporary closed due to the tsunami and will re-open tonight. It’s probably terribly crowded now anyway, so we better stay here for two or three more days before leaving.”

“Sure!” Phoenix agreed. He then looked at Dragon and asked, “Dragon, how did you know my last name is Pang?”

“I guessed it, but I was pretty sure about it.” Dragon smiled.

“How did you guess that?” Phoenix asked.

Looking at the puzzled Phoenix, Dragon started to laugh. “This relates to Zhu-ge’s family teachings from the past. My dad told me. I don’t need to detail you any more on the Zhu-ge Liang¹⁰. He left behind a treasure put inside a bag, and it is passed from one generation to another. It says that in our generation, *Wen-chang* star and *Wen-qu* star meet again, and according to *Shushu*¹¹, this is *Chang Qu Reunion*.”

Dragon sipped the coffee and sighed. “The last *Chang* and *Qu* reunion was between our ancestors, *Wo-long* and *Feng-chu*¹². However, one star fell down too early, so the other one couldn’t succeed even he had enormous power. What was said by Master Shuijing¹³ came true. *Wo-long* found his Master, but because the timing was wrong, he couldn’t succeed in defeating the *Wu* and *Wei* Dynasties. This is a great regret in history.”

¹⁰ Zhu-ge Liang (諸葛亮), also known as *Wo-long*, was the Prime Minister of Shu dynasty in the period of the Three Kingdoms. He is believed to be the cleverest man in the Chinese history.

¹¹ *Shushu* (術數) is the collective name for various kind of Chinese fortune telling methods.

¹² *Feng-chu* was a man of wisdom in the Three Kingdoms time and regarded as clever as Zhu-ge Liang.

¹³ Master Shuijing was the teacher of *Wo-long* and *Feng-chu*.

“Yes, my ancestor, Feng-chu, died young. It was destiny. No one could change it,” Phoenix said.

Dragon continued, “According to the message inside the silk bag, I was born of *Wen-chang* star and will encounter a descendent of Pang who was born of *Wen-qu* star. It is said that we would meet during winter, in a disaster, and join hands together in rescue work. Today, we met the two monks on the beach, and they were there to witness this incident. And, they gave us each a sacred object. The *Chang* and *Qu* are two outstanding people, and ordinary people can’t match with them. On the beach, it was clear you are an extraordinary person. No one else had a sense of what was going to happen just from the environment. There is definitely something special about you.” Dragon smiled at Phoenix, who blushed at the compliment.

“Dragon, that’s enough. I was so anxious during the disaster. How can you say anything like this?” Phoenix didn’t know what to make of Dragon’s compliments or his stories. Then he said, “The last *Chang Qu* Reunion happened more than a thousand years ago. This time, there must be some revelations.”

Dragon said seriously, “You’re right. But even though this happened a thousand years ago, our people are still living in poverty. We have peace in the world, and it is different than when our ancestors had to live through wars. This new era has leaders who are far-sighted and down-to-Earth. Our country is emerging, and it is perfect timing!”

After some contemplation, Phoenix nodded his head and agreed. “Right... this is the right timing! Prosper only comes after failure. When we go from one extreme, things change, and a sleeping dragon will emerge after 200 years of being inactive. When you see the leaves falling, you know it’s autumn. The same goes for China. The US government will act fast. They will try to criticize and get control. They have been keeping a close eye on China.”

Dragon nodded his head many times in total agreement. “As *Su Shi*¹⁴ says, ‘When there’s a great incident, there’ll be born the great people.’ You and I have met for a reason, my friend. Not only we can help in contributing to promote the country’s culture and its economy, but maybe we can also play an important role in the world.” The two young guys enjoyed talking to each other about their aspirations and plans.

Dragon asked, “Phoenix, I heard from my dad that Master Zhu-ge also gave a treasure bag to Feng-chu’s descendents. Are you able to keep it now since it’s been so long?”

Once Phoenix heard this, he became sad. As he thought deeply, he became quiet, and Dragon could tell that something had caused him to tense up. “Brother, are you okay?” Dragon asked. “Can I help you with anything?”

¹⁴ Su Shi (蘇軾) is a Chinese literator and poet in the Song Dynasty.

Phoenix nodded his head, sighed, and smiled at Dragon. “It is nothing. That just made me think about something in the past – when my parents lost their lives in a traffic accident.”

“Oh, I’m sorry!” Dragon said with regret.

“Please don’t say that. You didn’t do anything wrong. Right before they died in that accident, my parents told me the secret about the treasure bag.”

The waiter handed them two hot coffees. Phoenix sipped the coffee and calmed down. “This happened three years ago. It was a black Friday and the day after Easter. I was practicing rugby in the morning, and I asked my dad to pick me up at the end of the practice. When I left the pitch, I saw my dad driving in my direction. My mom was with him, and I was so happy because I knew that the whole family was going to have a big lunch together – something we didn’t do very often because my mom was usually too busy at work. I waved at them and jumped up and down. I was so happy to see them.”

Phoenix picked up the teaspoon and stirred his coffee. He continued, grief stricken, “Fate comes when you’re not aware. It tests you. My parents and I were only ten meters apart when suddenly, an old man came out in front of my dad’s car. He seemed to come from nowhere. To avoid hitting the old man, my dad swerved in the other direction. When he did, he lost control of the car, and it crashed into a container

truck parked by the side of the road. There was a terribly loud noise as my dad's car went under the truck."

Phoenix sighed deeply and went on. "I saw the whole thing with my own eyes, but I couldn't believe what happened. My mind became blank, and I froze for several seconds before I could even move. I screamed and became frantic as I ran clumsily toward my dad's car, hoping to somehow save my parents. When I came near them, I saw that all the car windows were shattered. The front of the car was smashed in completely, and my parents' legs were trapped under the truck. I couldn't do anything to help them. They were both bleeding profusely from their heads and obviously seriously injured. There was blood everywhere. At that very moment, I knew my parents were leaving me behind. I felt scared, sad, and dizzy. I screamed loudly and cried, then held my mom. But by then, she was gone. She wasn't breathing."

Phoenix took another sip of the coffee and squinted, trying to hold back his tears. "As I tried to pull my mom free through the window, I looked over at my dad. He was still conscious but in great pain. The situation was very critical. In a pained whisper, he asked me to come to him. I held my dad and became very sad. While he held my hand, he said, 'I have two things to tell you. First, please pick up a treasure bag from the safety deposit box in the bank. Second, please forgive the old man who came out of the road. Do not blame him for what's happened.' When he finished saying this to me, he died, and the ambulance came." A pool of tears had formed in Phoenix's eyes. He blinked several times to keep

them from falling.

When he regained his composure a bit, he recalled, “My heart felt like there were knives cutting into me. I was holding my parents and cried loudly. When the rescue team came, they tried hard to get me away from my parents and calm me down. At that moment, I could see briefly through my tears the old man who ran out to the road. He was standing not too far away. I couldn’t hold myself any longer. Filled with anger, I ignored what my dad told me and ran toward the old man. I held him tightly and shook him, screamed at him, and demanded angrily, ‘Give my parents back to me, you clumsy old fool! You killed my parents!’”

Phoenix continued, “The old man didn’t move. Instead, he just let me shake him and shout at him. Others tried to separate us, but the old man suddenly looked up to the sky and laughed. With tears on his face, he said in a low voice, ‘Boy, I’m sorry, but I can’t give your parents back. I’m a sinner! I’m a sinner!’” Phoenix looked at Dragon, shook his head, and said sadly, “We were both very depressed. The police separated us, and they took the old man to the police car, then put me into the ambulance to wait.”

Phoenix said, “When I returned home from the hospital, I could see our family picture hanging on my parents’ bedroom wall. There I was, smiling right there with them. We were a happy family then, but now I was an orphan. The grief was unbearable! I hated the old man who caused this misfortune. I thought I’d never forgive him! When I

thought of how much I hated him, I remembered what my dying father had asked me to do. I couldn't forgive him. I just couldn't. But I remembered how badly my father had pleaded with me to do it. It was his dying wish." Phoenix said, "For the whole night, I was struggled with myself. I suffered from so much sadness. But at last I decided to forgive the old man as my dad wanted me to. I didn't understand why my dad asked me to do that, but I knew he wouldn't want to see me living in hatred. After breakfast, I was going to visit that old man, but while I was reading the newspaper, I was shocked."

"What happened?" asked Dragon.

"Well, in the newspaper, it mentioned the car accident where my parents died, but it also mentioned that an old man got hit by a coach. It said, 'An elderly man, near age sixty, was struck by a coach bus at midnight. Sources say that the old man was infamous for running out into traffic, and it is believed he ran in front of the bus purposely because of his earlier involvement in an automobile crash that killed two. The coach bus struck him after failing to stop, and the man was dragged under the vehicle and lacerated in two. By the time the rescue team arrived, the elderly man was already dead, but witnesses say his last words were, *I can return my only life to you. I am sorry!* Neighbors tell us the man lived alone and that he often attempted to race oncoming traffic, as if he were cheating death. Each time he survived this dangerous habit, he became very excited. It is suggested that he may have been suffering from depression and loneliness due to the death of his wife many years ago... ' "

Phoenix shook his head, looked at Dragon (who was awestruck), and continued, “At that moment, I realized my dad probably met this old man before. He knew about the old man’s fragile emotions and knew their deaths would cause him even more regret, especially if I kept on blaming him. Surely, the old man was already suicidal, and his own regret and my blame would clearly make it worse. When I finished reading the newspaper, I regretted what I did. I regretted that I was not calm and caused the situation to get worse. This is one big regret in my life.” Phoenix finished with a big sigh and then calmed himself down.

Dragon could see that Phoenix had learned from this misfortune. He had changed his approach to life, become more down-to-Earth, and handled things more objectively than before. Dragon stretched his hand and patted Phoenix shoulder. He then said sincerely, “You have already survived difficult periods, and you are very strong.” Dragon could see that Phoenix was getting back to normal, regaining his composure. He tried to change the mood and said with a smile, “Phoenix, you are great – a fine young man who is nice, gentle, and amazing.”

“Dragon, stop teasing me. Can’t you say anything else? You’re embarrassing me!” Phoenix shook his head and smiled.

Dragon became more cheerful and said, “Yes, I do, I do...”

The two talked for a long while and drank a lot of coffee. When the coffee shop closed, they went to Phoenix’s villa to continue their chat.

They sat on the sofa and kept on talking while they continued to nibble on their favorite snacks.

Dragon smiled and looked at Phoenix. “When I first saw you, I was shocked. Your ancestor, Feng-chu, wasn’t a good-looking man. I thought you would look like him. To my surprise, you look really great. It’s amazing.”

Phoenix smiled and said, “Thanks for your compliments. Owing to the misfortunes of Feng-chu, my ancestors knew that besides self-restraint and knowledge, appearance was also important. That’s why all of them got married to beautiful wives who were virtuous. Look, my mother looks just like an angel.” Phoenix took a wallet out of his pocket and showed the picture of his parents and himself.

Dragon praised him. “Yes, she does. That’s why you are so nice. Alas!” Dragon suddenly became sad and speechless.

Phoenix asked him, “Why are you so sad all the sudden?”

Dragon looked at Phoenix, and his frown crept up into a smile. “I hope that you won’t be fighting with me for a girl later on.”

Phoenix didn’t know how to react. He said, “Same for you. You are so nice, lovely, and such a sweet talker. I admire you for that. How could I ever fight with you?” The two started laughing loudly.

Phoenix and Dragon became good friends and spent time getting to know each other. Phoenix asked, “Where are you studying?”

“I have already earned a Doctor of Medicine degree, but I’m now studying for my Ph.D. in Physics at Harvard University. My dad works at NASA. He is responsible for launching the space shuttle. He is also a graduate of the Department of Physics at Harvard University. He has a Ph.D. degree and is a genius in Physics. His nickname is ‘Feynman in the Far East.’ My mom is very nice and very successful in academics. She graduated from Stanford University and received a Master’s in Economics. Later, she earned a Ph.D. in Statistics. She is now the General Manager of the Merchandising Department of General Motors. Both of them are very busy at work. To have dinner together, we have to make appointment in advance! They still take good care of me and love me very much. Where are you studying?”

Phoenix answered, “I am studying at Stanford University and working for a Ph.D. in Biological Technology. What a coincidence! I received a Doctor of Medicine degree as well. Uncle Bill, my guardian, used to be my dad’s best friend. They were schoolmates in both primary and high school. Uncle Bill treats me as his own son and loves me. He is a master in mechanical engineering and still a bachelor. He works as the principal of a Catholic school in Hong Kong. Uncle Bill told me last year that 60 percent of the teachers are quitting. Half of them are quitting because they were harassed by the students. Fighting is common among the students. This school has been established for six years, and two students have already been beaten to the point of

becoming handicap. Police often send officers to the school to investigate, and some students get sent to the police station for questioning. The crime rate in the school is the highest in the city. There are all kinds of crimes. Uncle Bill went to the court once to be a witness. He was asked to testify against a student who injured someone with a knife just outside the school. The defendant in the case was sentenced to imprisonment at a boys' home for six months. The defendant took off his shoe and threw it toward the judge in the court. The judge was smart in moving quickly and got hold of the shoe. He then commented, 'Thank God I was the captain of the basketball team in school. Otherwise, you might have hit me.' The judge charged the defendant with contempt of the court and increased his sentence to one year."

Dragon laughed until he felt ache in his stomach. Phoenix also couldn't help laughing. He didn't understand why Uncle Bill would let the school get this bad. He said, "The academic performance of the school is bad, the worst in the city. Other principals laugh at Uncle Bill whenever there are meetings. Uncle Bill was ashamed and asked me to help out the situation in his school for six months. He wants to have a student from the school to be able to get perfect grades on the public exam. That way, he can regain his pride and boast his achievements."

Dragon was laughing so hard his tears were coming out. He tried to catch his breath and said, "Great! Phoenix, were you determined to help him out and save him from disgrace?"

Phoenix turned his eyes up, then said with a funny face, “I won’t disobey Uncle Bill. He always gets his way. If I don’t follow his instructions, I won’t have peace! Frankly, even if he hadn’t asked me, I would have offered to help him out of the situation. It’s not really a school where I’d want to go, but it’s Uncle Bill’s only hope.”

Dragon asked enthusiastically, “Phoenix, can I go to your uncle’s school too? It sounds like fun. My intuition tells me that it’ll be very challenging and interesting.”

“Do you mean it? If you’re interested, then I’ll definitely join you. With your company, I’ll be like a tiger with a pair of wings and will succeed in my endeavours.” Phoenix was overjoyed.

“Phoenix, when will you return to Hong Kong to start the job?” Dragon asked.

Phoenix answered, “I’ll report to uncle’s school on the third of January after the New Year holidays. I’ll go directly from Thailand to Hong Kong and live at my uncle’s place. What is your schedule like?”

Dragon said, “I can definitely meet you before that day. My dad has two flats in Hong Kong. One is in Stanley, and the other is in Park Island. Accommodation is no issue for me. But I’ve to go back to USA first...”

Phoenix said immediately, “Right! You’re a good son. You must find

an excuse to convince your parents to let you stay in Hong Kong.”

Though the two had only known each other for a short while, they already understood each other so well and regretted they didn't meet earlier. They could talk about everything and seemed to have unlimited topics to chat about. At last, they had to part from each other after two days together. It was just like Phoenix's ancestor, Feng-chu. When Feng-chu was fifteen or sixteen years old, once he heard about Master Shuijing, he traveled from far away just to learn from this Master. When they met, Master Shuijing was climbing a tree, collecting mulberries. They had a long talk. They discussed everything, including virtue, kindness, managing the country, and war tactics. They spent an entire day just talking – about things in the past and things in the present. Master Shuijing was very surprised to see that the young man (who looked like an ordinary person and seemed stupid) could have such discussions with him. He was talented and knowledgeable in spite of his appearance, and Master Shuijing praised him and nicknamed him “*the crown of scholars in the southern region.*”

In the world of sages, who have risen above ordinary people, it's indeed hard to find such a friend. The encounter of Dragon and Phoenix was a miraculous one indeed – two people perfectly matched.