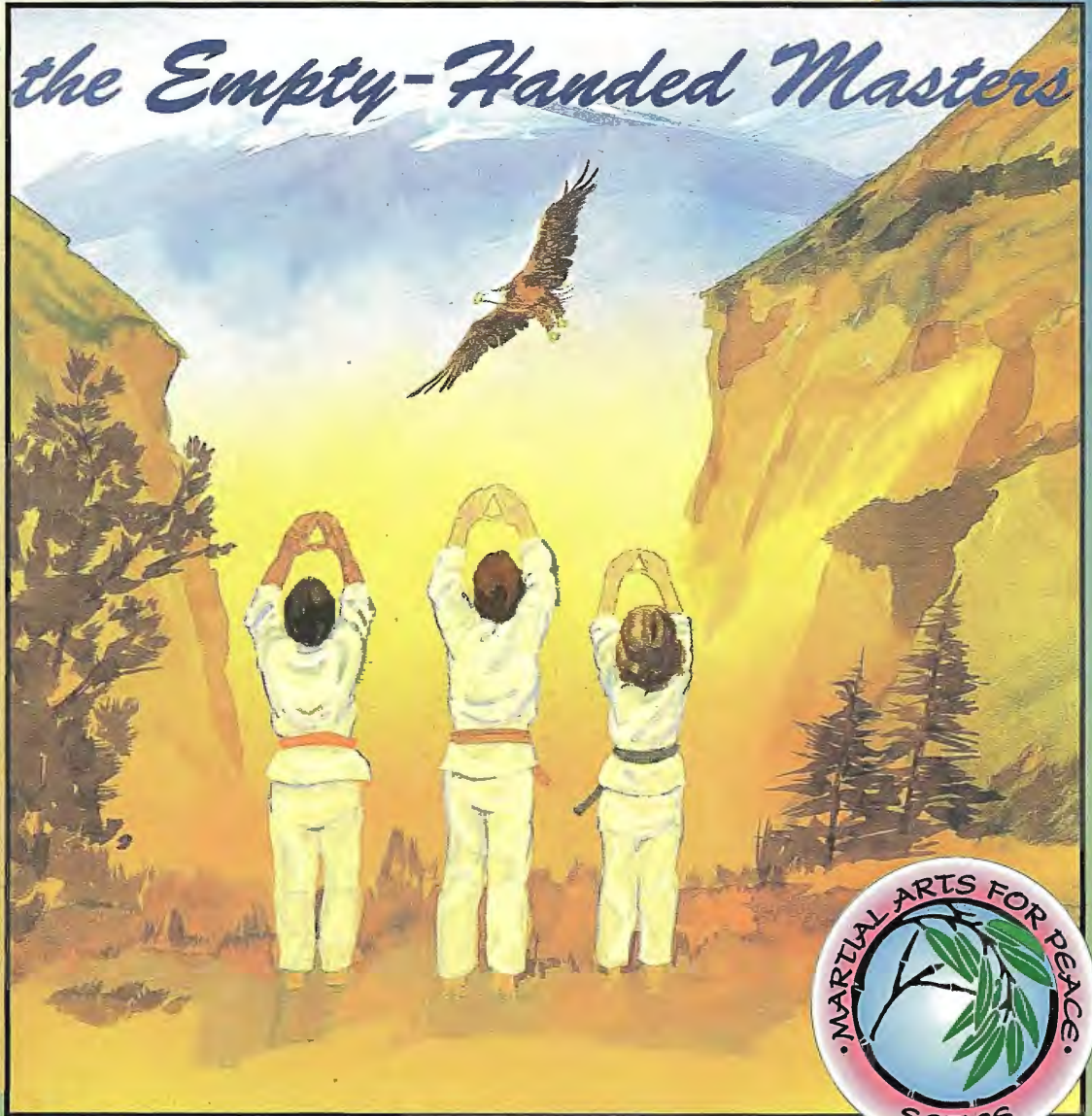


FLIGHT OF THE GOLDEN EAGLE

Tales of the Empty-Handed Masters



Illustrated by
Rod Cameron



Terrence Webster-Doyle

*Resolving Conflict
Peacefully*

FLIGHT OF THE GOLDEN EAGLE

TALES OF THE
EMPTY-HANDED MASTERS

by Terrence Webster-Doyle



Atrium Society Publications
Middlebury, Vermont

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*Special thanks
to all the Martial Arts instructors
who perceive the need to help young people
understand and resolve conflict
peacefully.*

Clouds... they're either coming or going.

— Felicity Aine Doyle



To the Reader,

I've written these "Tales of the Empty-Handed Masters" to explore ideas, feelings, and aspects of training which are common to *all* Martial Arts styles. My background is mainly in Japanese Karate, and I have used certain Japanese words such as *kiai*, *hara*, *hakama*, and *gi* — certainly not out of disrespect for other styles, but simply because they are the terms I am used to. You will see that these tales have universal significance and are meaningful to all Martial Artists, whatever their style.

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The Flight of the Golden Eagle

Have you ever watched a bird soar on the air, wings spread out, floating, spiraling upward, so easily, effortlessly, gliding free in the beauty of endless sky? How did you feel seeing such a bird? Like you were free too, soaring up above the earth, with no cares, no worries? Sometimes people are so earthbound, so full of the worries, stresses and strains of daily life — as if they have blinders on, like horses trained to look only straight ahead, placing one foot after another.

People are often so afraid. Few ever break free to soar like an eagle, high above the rest. People, held back by their own self-created prisons, think that life itself, their “situation,” or another person is holding them back. They don’t realize that their prison is their mind, that they are unfree because they think they are. People have been taught (conditioned) to think in ways that limit their lives. But there are some who fly, who break out of the imaginary chains that hold them... because they realize that there are no chains!

Imagine a little bird that was captured and put in a cage when it was young. It only knows a world inside its limitations and has forgotten the greater world outside. One day someone leaves the cage door open. The bird senses this but stays inside its cage; it feels secure there now. Outside, in the wonderful world beyond, there are golden eagles, great birds of freedom which soar to endless heights! They have few boundaries. Their world is unconfined, creative and joyous.

Imagine that the golden eagles look down from the sky at the world below and see the bird cages, and feel the sorrow of the confined birds. Feeling great compassion, the eagles

descend to earth to show the caged birds how they can be free, but few want to learn. Most prefer to go on pretending that their cage is the whole world. But some do listen to the great eagles and realize that the door is open. They too are afraid at first and remain within the safety of their cages. Their wings are weak; they can barely remember how to fly. But some try, and try again, and their wings grow broad and strong. The eagles lead them out of their cages to soar in the expanse of sky. Then the newly free birds look down at the earth below and see all the little cages and feel the sorrow of the remaining prisoners. And they, in turn, return to help their caged friends below.

And on it goes.

***Mastering others requires force;
Mastering the self requires enlightenment.***

— Lao-tzu





Song of Life Facing Death

The high hills were covered with new snow. It was early in the season for such whiteness. The land was hushed, not a creature stirring, except for a lone large bird slowly gliding in the air far above the earth. The snow glistened — millions of tiny iridescent crystals shining in the sun. The branches of trees, with few remaining leaves, were lined with frozen snow, bending low to bear their gentle burden. Fall leaves of red, gold and green were resting against a background of soft white.

The student walked slowly in silence, appreciating the splendor of this unexpected early winter. He had awakened early to put on his winter uniform and snow shoes for the first time. As he paddled through the crunching snow, the wind ceased. The frozen lake below shimmered like a sapphire in the early winter sun.

The student ventured far away from camp, lost in the beauty of the day. Suddenly, without seeing or hearing anything unusual, he felt a presence that made the hair on the back of his neck stand up. Like an animal sensing danger, he stopped and looked in all directions. Everything was still. As he turned to retrace his steps, he noticed an animal's tracks off to his left on higher ground. Curious, but with instinctive caution, the student climbed up to get a better look. There were three sets of prints: one larger and two smaller. By their shape, he could see that they were the tracks of a large cat.

The student suddenly felt alone, far away from the safety of his camp. He had wandered beyond the limits set by the teachers for traveling alone, but the morning was so wonderful that he had become unaware of time and place. Now realizing

that he had wandered, he quickly started back down the hill by which he had come. For a moment he was disoriented and could not find his own footprints. When he did, he began to retrace his way back. Rounding a bend in a thick part of the woods, he stopped dead in his tracks! There in front of him, blocking his way, was a mother mountain lion and her two cubs. All were frozen in a heightened state of alertness.

The mother mountain lion's green eyes flared, her teeth flashing a deadly warning. The two cubs stayed close to her, not moving, intensely aware of the human intruder. The student felt fear in the air and the danger it was producing. For what seemed like eternity, they all stood frozen in indecision. The student's heart pumped faster; his muscles tensed; his mouth was dry. This was primitive fear born of the instinct for survival. In this primal encounter, the mountain lion had the advantage since she was well-equipped by nature to battle her foes with sharp claw and fang. She could also run fast when threatened, but with her cubs this was not an option she could risk — and the student instinctively knew it.

Without conscious reasoning, the student stood very still and began to sing a children's lullaby he had heard as a small boy. From some long forgotten place, the song emerged. It was as if his own mother's voice was speaking to the mother in the mountain lion. Some deep connection beyond rational thinking or action prompted this gentle song to come forth in this moment of extreme danger.

The mountain lion, almost undetectably, relaxed her defense and began to listen. For an endless moment outside of time and place, a young boy was singing to a large mother mountain lion and her cubs! There was a unity between them,

a primeval bond. Neither wanted to harm the other; each had been reacting out of fear for survival and wanted only peace and well-being. The song filled the student with an energy that allowed him to feel whole again, whereas moments before he had felt disconnected, as if he were outside his body with fear.

And then there arose, without thinking, from deep within him, the *kiai* (a Martial Arts shout) — a great booming *kiai* that echoed off the snowy mountains. The mountain lioness, who had been lulled by the song into momentary inaction, suddenly awoke to this commanding sound. It was a sound that did not threaten nor harm. It was a sound that charged the air with energy and strength — a call to power that was understood by the mountain lioness. She did not show fear or aggression when confronted with this sudden charge of intensity. With dignity and respect, she lowered her protective claw and stood tall next to her cubs. The cubs looked up at their mother and she looked straight at the student. Then, without warning, she turned and slowly walked up the hill, her cubs trailing along beside her.

The student watched them as they disappeared into the snowy woods and beyond, until he was standing alone in the forest, wondering if what had just happened really did! Slowly he moved on towards camp, noticing how much more he was aware of. The smell of the woods, the feeling and sound of snow beneath his feet, the slightest glimmer of sun reflected on the scene around him — all magnified a hundred times greater than ever before. He was alive. Alive! And because he had brushed up against death, he felt keenly, exquisitely, joyously alive.

***Life is not a problem
to be solved
but a reality
to be experienced.***

— J.J.Van Der Leeow

Giving Up — Getting All

“Perform every act of your life as if it is your last,” the chief instructor said with flashing eyes and dramatic presence. “In Martial Arts training, give up your self.

“Look at this bamboo branch. See how it bends lower and lower under the weight of the snow. But there is a point when the snow falls from the branch to the ground, the bowed branch springing back into place. When you practice your Martial Arts form, move like the falling snow, naturally. And like the bamboo plant, allow yourself to respond spontaneously. Then your movements will not be weighted down by the effort of will power — the effort that says, ‘I *will* be stronger, more powerful, faster!’”

The students were standing in the snow on a bright early winter day, the sun warm on their skins, the air windless. Majestically, the snow surrounded them as they listened intently to their teacher.

“But if you try to do this, you will fail. If you have thoughts of winning, you will surely lose. But there is something you can do. Give your total self to every act, as if it is your last!”

An assistant instructor lined the students up in a plowed practice area. Over and over they repeated their basic moves, keeping the cold of the morning at bay by the intensity of the exercises. Then they began the well-worn forms, a combination of techniques that they had practiced so many times before. As they continued their movements, they became aware of a new sensation.

“Faster, harder, more, give of yourself,” the assistants were shouting, encouraging their students. “Let each movement be the first and final one!”

“Now stop,” they commanded. “Prepare yourself for one set of techniques that you can give yourself to, utterly and completely. Are you ready?”

“Yes, sir!” they shouted back in unison.

“Now begin!” The instructor counted out the cadence of moves, encouraging each student to an even greater and still greater commitment.

The sensation they were feeling became more intense. It was as if they had fallen through a hole in time, that there was no time — only a great stillness, even though they were moving physically. After they had completed their forms, they realized that time *had* stopped, for they had been practicing for over an hour when it seemed only a few minutes! They had forgotten about the world and everything around them during that intense concentration of doing forms. They had felt as if they were part of the whole — the snow, the earth, trees, mountain and lake. Each movement did not feel as if it were leading to another, but rather that it was unique and complete unto itself, yet part of everything else. They went beyond themselves, letting go without effort, without wanting or intending to do so. They were flying free.





***Drinking a bowl of green tea,
I stopped the war.***

— Paul Reps

Nobody Knows

The sun was strong and the snow had melted. Birds excitedly pecked the ground for food, and chased each other about. A solitary grey squirrel stood still, watching the two human figures sitting quietly in the woods.

The student sat in front of her instructor. She had an urgent request.

“Teacher, please show me the essence of Empty Self in the Martial Arts.”

The teacher thought for a moment then responded, “Dear student, it’s right under your feet!”

“But I don’t understand. What is under my feet?”

“What are you standing on? Look, don’t think!” replied the teacher firmly.

“Who should I ask if you will not tell me?” the earnest student persisted.

“Ask that tree over there,” the teacher said, pointing.

“I don’t understand, Teacher.”

“Neither do I,” she replied with a smile.



*The gift of living is to see
One is an empty vessel —
Lost and unknowing,
Oh, there is Love!*

— The Wayside

A Winter Night's Tale

“I will tell you a story about the beginning of man and the beginning of conflict. It is a simple story about why people have been at war with each other for all these thousands of years. It is not hard to follow, so don't complicate it.” The chief instructor settled back in his chair and the students, in sitting positions in front of him, leaned forward in anticipation. Wood crackled as flames danced hypnotically in the fireplace, casting flickering shadows about the room. Outside was the dark night. Wind whistled through cracks in the old building. A barricade of wood and a stove kept the howling elements just far enough away that the students felt secure within the fragile protection that their camp provided.

“Millions of years ago, human beings were born on this earth, naked and having to survive against incredible odds. Other creatures were much better equipped to survive than humans were. Many animals had fangs and claws, or could run fast or fly out of the way of danger. Others could change their coloring to blend with their surroundings so predators could not easily spot them.

“The human animals faced a wild and extreme existence where all kinds of creatures threatened to devour them. Survival was difficult! But humans developed a keen capacity to reason, to think, which surpassed that of the other animals. Humans decided to band together in groups for mutual safety. The clan, a small group of people related to each other not only by birth but by necessity, became a means of survival. And it worked well!

“So this clan found that they could help each other. They created ways to differentiate themselves from other clans, because the idea was catching on. Over many years, the various clans created symbols used for recognition: dress, language, flags — all sorts of ways to be different. Clans grew into tribes, each claiming a certain territory in which to hunt and find food.”

Branches of a tree scraped against the building. The moon disappeared behind clouds, causing the room to grow even darker. One of the assistant instructors lit some candles and placed them around the room to create more light.

“Can you begin to picture in your mind how battles between groups of humans originated? Well, as tribes grew in numbers, they began to cover huge areas of land. Territories providing food and other necessities of life had to be protected, or a tribe’s very survival would be endangered. As the free and open territories grew smaller and the tribes larger, the problem of survival became greater — and so did the conflict. At first conflict was settled with sticks and stones, then clubs, bows and arrows, swords, guns — and then came the great and terrible machines of war that could kill large numbers of people in a single attack.

“Obviously some members of these tribes were concerned about all the conflict and tried to bring about peace. Special groups were formed to deal with the problem, and various plans for peace were instigated. Soon these special groups conflicted with other special groups, adding to the problem. People who were trying to bring about peace were, strangely enough, bringing about more conflict! But no one gave up easily. Each held on to their plans and their group, each convinced that



they had the best answer. And the conflict became greater and greater.

“Then one day some of the people from each of the great tribes — which had grown so large that they were now called countries or nations — decided to create a united group made up of representatives from each nation. This group would settle problems that affected everyone. They secured a place where representatives from all the countries, large and small, could meet to create peace.

“And people came representing their own groups, one from each of the groups around the world. They talked about peace, about creating unity, about sharing resources, and about one world for all. They talked and talked and talked; for many years they talked. They gave awards to each other for the most impressive ideas. But nothing seemed to work! There was more and more conflict, and more separatist groups being born all over the earth. The representatives became confused, realizing that they were not getting any closer to creating peace. But they kept on trying as the world became increasingly violent.”

The chief instructor held up a map of the world. “What do you see, students?” One of the assistant instructors held up a large candle to illuminate the map as the students drew closer.

“I see a piece of paper with continents, rivers, mountains and seas.”

“I do, too,” said another student.

“This is what the earth looked like before there were tribes, nations and countries. This map depicts the way it *actually* is,” their teacher said, leaning over the map.

“Now, what do you see?” he asked, turning the paper over.

“I see countries; I see the earth broken up into parts, fragments,” said one of the students in front.

“I see the world broken up into pieces,” said another, “with lines drawn on the earth that define territories and boundaries that separate human beings from each other,” said another student.

The teacher responded, “What humans have done is quite obvious when we look at the two maps.”

“How can people bring about peace when the world is divided up like this? How can we have unity or equality when people belong to separate tribes or groups?” one of the senior students asked seriously.

“It doesn’t make sense to me that those people from all over the world in that special group for peace can bring about wholeness if they are divided from each other by definition. It seems to me that in order to have unity, people cannot belong to separate groups,” a student commented who was standing up in the back. “It seems so simple! Why can’t people see that they are preventing peace from happening because they belong to separate groups, each thinking that theirs is the best one. It seems so crazy!” the student continued.

“Are you saying that you, a young person, can readily see the problem that we human beings have created — that we have divided ourselves through being identified with a particular group and have created conflict by doing so?” the teacher enquired of the student.

“Yes, I can see this. Why can’t everyone?!”

“Because, dear student, many people are asleep. They are so used to being in their prisons that they aren’t aware that

Peace Equals Unity.



anything else is possible. Do you recall that we talked about ‘conditioning,’ how people think and act like robots which have been programed in a certain way? Well, people all over the world have been conditioned, or programed, over thousands of years to cling to their prisons, their cages. They think that is the way to survival, and don’t realize that they are creating more conflict by doing so — and are therefore threatening their own survival.”

“Well, why don’t they wake up?” asked one of the younger students.

“They are afraid of letting go of all they have stored up... their piece of the pie, their small secure world. Remember how all this started so long ago: safety and security in numbers, in being a part of a clan, tribe, group, nation. And we are still doing this today, thousands of years later.”

A student spoke up, “I don’t think that division works any longer. We are creating so much conflict by separating into different groups.”

“I agree with you, young woman. The challenge for those of us who see the truth of this, who see the problem for what it really is — at the root — is to do something about it! Most adults have made solving the problem even harder by creating more groups dedicated to achieving harmony, peace, and well-being. You are the future leaders, the next generation. And you are fortunate to have been trained as Martial Artists in the right way. You have the skills and understanding to free others from bondage so they can fly like the eagle, free to live in peace and love. This is the challenge each of you must face, but you are not alone. You will each find your own way to show others what you have learned. Some of you may be teachers in schools

dedicated to understanding what prevents peace. The Martial Arts when taught properly provide an excellent way to do this. Are you beginning to see? Do you trust what you see, what you are learning? Are you, at the same time, questioning all that you see and hear — in the here and now, tonight? Question to find out if what we are saying now about global conflict is true or not! If you find out that it is true, then you have discovered something of immense importance. Then it will be your responsibility to teach others. Don't worry if all this sounds too hard. If you stay with it, keep at it, you will discover how you can contribute to showing others. There is only one ingredient that you need: understanding. And if you want to understand and persevere, you will!"

The fire blazed up for a moment as one of the large logs fell, sending sparks up the chimney. The room was quiet. Smoke curled up into the night; the room was filled with the sweet odor of burnt wood. Candles flickered, sending droplets of wax cascading into hot pools. The chief instructor and the students sat in silence for a while before going to bed, where they were comforted by heavy blankets and the moon shining above.

*A journey of a thousand miles
Starts under one's feet.*

— Lao-tzu

Shuhari

The students stood around the practice hall talking softly with each other. When their teacher entered, everyone turned and bowed.

“Good morning, teacher,” they said in unison and with real affection.

“Good morning to you, students,” their teacher returned, showing mutual respect by bowing low. He paused, then continued, “Please have a seat. Today we will play a Martial Arts game, and you will find out something about yourself: how you hurt yourself!”

Without saying another word, their teacher bowed again, and — with mature grace and steady, powerful moves — began an incredible form that they had never seen before. Each movement was new, fresh and energetic. Although he didn’t move as quickly as the younger assistant instructors, there was depth to his form that comes only with time and experience. The form just stopped, with no particular ending movement, leaving the students with the feeling that the teacher’s performance would continue later.

“That was a *Shuhari* form, students. The world *Shuhari* means learning from tradition (*shu*); having your own insight into what you are learning (*ha*); and going beyond tradition because you have understood it (*ri*). The *Shuhari* form is performed spontaneously. In other words, you make it up as you go. There is no particular beginning, except that you always start with a block. And there is no particular ending — except what feels right, or when the movement naturally comes to an

end. The form therefore can be very short or quite long, but it is never repeated. It is only performed once, and then forgotten.

"Now, stand up and I will show you something about the Shuhari form as compared to your regular forms."

The students stood up, stretched for a few minutes, and when they were warmed up, the teacher asked for a volunteer.

"Now, young lady, I want you to perform your favorite form. Just do it as you always do," he instructed.

The young girl bowed to her teacher and then to her fellow classmates. She then took the ready position. With great skill and speed, she went through a difficult form; each movement was clear and strong. At the end, she bowed again to the teacher and students.

"Now, stay there. I want you to try it another way. Please do the same form but with your eyes closed!"

She looked surprised but did as the teacher requested. After bowing, she slowly and carefully went through her form until she ended.

"Now open your eyes and see where you are."

She was surprised to find that she had ended up exactly where she started, just as she had done with her eyes open.

"Good, your form is well-rehearsed," he commented. "But now I want you to try it one more way."

The student bowed and said, "Yes, sir."

"This time do it backwards."

"Backwards, sir! How so?" she puzzled.

"Backwards! Just start from the end — and end at the beginning."

She stood there for a minute with her eyes closed, running the form through her mind. With a confused look on her face,

she bowed and started. But after her first few moves, she faltered and stopped.

“May I start over, sir?”

“Please do, but don’t think. Just do it!”

She started again. After successfully but slowly passing her original point, she again had to stop.

“This is very confusing, sir. I keep wanting to go the other way. My mind tells me one thing and my body another.”

She tried a few more times and after a while she awkwardly completed the form, after leaving out sections and ending up way off the starting mark.

“Thank you. Please sit down. You can see by our gracious volunteer that it is difficult to take yourself out of a form you know so well, because it has become a habit: a deeply-ingrained, single-minded way of doing something exactly the same as it has always been done and shall always be done. This habitual behavior is necessary under certain circumstances, but if you ever have to defend yourself, then an habitual form will probably hurt you rather than help you. Do you get the point?”

The students looked puzzled.

“Let me say it another way and then you will have a real, practical experience of what I’m trying to show you,” the teacher offered.

“If you were attacked, let’s say in our mock fighting classes, how would you defend yourself if your opponent didn’t go by the rules? In other words, if he or she just came at you? If you responded with a particular form, your approach wouldn’t match the attack. A pattern only works if the attacker follows the pattern’s attack response. In class, this works because this is how we train. But you also have to break that habit to



respond appropriately to whatever happens. Let me show you some examples.”

The teacher asked the whole group to get up and choose a partner.

“Now watch me. I need a volunteer again.” A young man stepped forward.

“Grab my wrist; hold on as tight as you can with both hands! Now if I try to pull away from him, I will have great difficulty because I am going against his strength. If I try to push towards him, this creates resistance. I may be bigger and stronger than he, and perhaps could push or pull him over, but why waste the energy when I can get free without effort?!” Suddenly, with a quick, deft movement, the teacher was free of the student’s grasp.

“You see, I did not act out of habit, and I did not try to go against him. I became sensitive to his weak points, and went with that. The weak points are usually where the thumbs and forefingers join. But I must be careful not to automatically make that assumption. Habits happen quickly and take a good deal of attention to break.

“Now grab me again, but in a different way. You can see that if I tried to get out of this new grip as I did before, I wouldn’t succeed because he has changed his method of holding me. So I have to respond with sensitivity to the new and find out where the weakness lies now. The past is the past and might not apply here. That doesn’t mean that I can’t use my learned techniques. I may just have to change the order. It is responding in this particular, unique moment that is important. Now each of you try this out.”

After a few minutes of experimentation, the instructor asked the students to stop.

“Did you see how easy it is to act out of habit — using what you think will work because it has worked in the past? This is where *Shuhari* comes in; it can help you overcome habit. Practicing *Shuhari* develops your sensitivity to what is actually happening in the moment. When you are quiet and listen to your body and its impulses, then you will ‘know’ what to do. This ‘knowing’ is not gained by learning a form, but comes out of a passion, or heightened awareness, within you. By passion, I don’t mean desire. Passion is a feeling that comes from living fully, completely. It is the force of life, you might say. You feel it naturally when you are happy, not happy as in pleasure or because you have acquired something new... but rather, when you are experiencing a spontaneous joyfulness.

“So *Shuhari* plays an important role in the Martial Arts: helping you respond naturally to situations by freeing you from habit. This does not only apply to defending yourself. *Shuhari* can be used every day in every aspect of your life — no matter what you are doing or where you are! Think about it. In what other situations can you see that *Shuhari* — being free of habit — can help you?”

The students practiced *Shuhari* for the rest of the afternoon. Each one, in turn, tried to do a form without resorting to an old pattern. At first this was hard because habit is strong. But after a while the students could do a few moves from a feeling of “passion.”

***There is really nothing to say,
So I will go on saying nothing.***

— Anonymous



No Mind

There was a special time set aside each week for students to see one of the teachers alone to discuss any concerns or questions they might have. During these times, intense learning occurred. This teaching and learning usually took a curious form, with the student asking questions and the teacher answering in unusual ways — sometimes in ways that didn't seem to make sense. The response to the question was understood only after the student had pondered it very carefully for a long while. Then something very unusual happened. When the student was thoroughly frustrated in not understanding the response, and gave up trying to understand, then precisely at this moment the student would have an insight into what had been said.

“Teacher, I have no peace of mind. Please help me calm my mind.”

“Student, will you bring your mind here so I can calm it for you?”

“Yes, but when I look for it I can't seem to find it!”

“There, you see. I've calmed your mind already!”

“Teacher, how is it that you see things so clearly?”

“I close my eyes.”

***If you work on your mind with your mind
How can you avoid an immense confusion?***

— Seng Ts'an

The Beast of the Dark Side

The teacher leapt at the students with the ferociousness of a great bear. With a *kiai* that sounded more like a growl, he rose up tall and struck the air with two curled hands, as if he were clawing a threatening predator. Then bending low and taking great strides, the teacher moved across the floor, swinging his arms in enormous sweeping motions until he stopped and gave one more roaring *kiai*.

“That is the great bear in me. The giant kodiak is my animal. I feel like the bear; I move like the bear; I fight like the bear. When I sleep, I dream I am the bear. One morning when I awoke, for a moment I wondered if I was a bear dreaming that he was a human, or if I was a human who had taken on the soul of a bear. It is this way with me,” the teacher said seriously. “It is the beast that is in me; this is the form the beast takes when it passes through me. This beast is in everyone; it is in you — and today you are going to meet *your* beast within.”

The students laughed nervously as their teacher asked them to stand. They understood the importance of questioning, of not believing in anything — in finding out for themselves what is true, even if their honored teacher tells them something is true. They also felt something primitive lurking deep within: a sulking, growling beast that they had only met in dreams or during long meditation practices. But they had never seriously looked at this beast.

“So what animal are you? Each of you has a special animal that is you, that represents the beast within. If you are successful in finding the right animal, then the beast within

you can act through that animal — and therefore will not cause you harm. Choose the wrong animal and you will end up fighting the beast within. Find no animal at all and the beast will lurk forever deep inside, haunting you for the rest of your life.

“Most people spend their lives running away from the beast, but they cannot escape for the beast is their own dark side. Open the door to this part of yourself by finding your animal; invite the beast to come out. This will let light in and you will not be afraid of the dark side any longer; it will not haunt you after that. In fact, the beast can become your ally, your companion and friend. Make friends with the beast of the dark side and it will become a source of great power and energy. Then you won’t be divided, afraid of that which is you... You will be united with your creative force.”

The students had never heard their teacher talk this way before. But what he said made sense to them, for they were all aware of something dark within themselves. Most people seemed to avoid discussing anything like this. However, there were some old books of myths at the school with stories about beasts and power and magical times of long ago. Most students hadn’t taken the books seriously and regarded them merely as fairy tales. Others avoided these stories because they seemed scary, weird, and forbidden.

Sensing his students thoughts, the teacher said, “I am not trying to scare you. I don’t believe in magic or the supernatural. Understanding the beast, as I call it, is something everyone comes to in their own way. In other cultures and times, people have referred to it differently. The beast is the animal nature of man. Some people try to deny it, but it is there.

“Man is different from other animals in being able to reason. But I am trying to get you to reach beneath reason to find a more primitive force that is also part of who we are. This force is wonderful when understood. Great writers, musicians, painters, even people in science, have come face-to-face with this part of themselves. It is where great creativity lies, waiting like a golden treasure. But most people avoid it because they are frightened, or because they do not want to accept their primitive ancestry. You may not realize how often you act out of this force, when, for example, you play games with each other. This same primeval energy can be harnessed for great achievements.”

The students listened very carefully because they had never heard anything like this before. They were interested and unafraid.

“Now each of you, please sit down quietly and meditate on what your animal is.”

The students sat down, keeping a good distance between each other for privacy. For about ten minutes, each meditated deeply, letting images arise and fade.

“Now when each of you feels you’ve found your animal, please come back to where I am sitting. When you are all here, we will make a circle.”

Slowly, one by one, at their own pace, the students gathered around the teacher.

“Well now, students, what occurred when you let the beast in you arise? What shape did it take; what animal form was suggested?”

“I felt like a monkey,” one of the students answered. The students and the teacher laughed politely at this revelation.





“A monkey!” another student exclaimed. “What does a monkey do to express the beast?”

“It beats its chest, and runs up trees, and swings freely and wildly in the branches.”

“How would you fight as your monkey? How would your beast show itself as a warrior?” the teacher enquired.

“My attack and defense would be to charge forward and make great threatening sounds, swinging my arms. This scares other creatures away,” the student answered.

“What other animals are in this room?” asked the teacher.

“I am a leopard, a great cat, and I growl, hiss, and claw at my opponent. I move quickly and pounce on my prey before it can escape.”

“I am a snake,” said another student. “I slither around and then rise up like a king cobra and strike suddenly. I depend on agility and speed.”

“I see myself as a mule. I kick my opponents with strong legs, sending them flying.”

“I am a great golden eagle. I fly high because I have wings and can spot my opponent from miles in the air with my ‘eagle eye.’ I swoop down, and with sharp talons, I snatch up my prey. But mainly I do not bother with opponents, because they can never reach me up so high in the sky!”

“Good, excellent! Isn’t it interesting to find the animal you are? Now when you do your forms today, practice them as if you are that animal and see what happens. See if you can find the beast and use its power for creative, peaceful means. To be a warrior of peace takes great power and energy!”

For the rest of the afternoon, the students practiced their forms, but with a new sense of strength and confidence. Each

felt calm, peaceful, without fear. With the discovery of the passion and strength of the beast within, came a sense of great gentleness and caring! The Martial Arts are so strange sometimes; peace is uncovered while learning how to fight!

*As the sun makes it new,
Day by day make it new,
Yet again make it new.*

— Confucius

Mental Combat

The winter had come again. Snow was falling once more, covering dead brown leaves with a delicate dusting of lacy white. Stark, tall trees stood leafless against the flat grey sky, welcoming swirling flakes raining down from above. The animals were fewer now as many had retreated into a season's hibernation.

The students would practice out in the snow for short periods. Their faces, hands, and feet would feel fresh and alive. Then they would return to the warmth of the practice hall. The room was continuously filled with a delicate odor of wood ash and smoked pine.

At certain times the students would gather in the main practice hall for "mental combat." They could question their teachers on anything at all. The teachers would often turn it around and question the students. Everyone had to be on their toes, not letting a question go by without paying attention to it.

One student called out to her teacher, "I've been in this place for a long time now but you have given me no spiritual teachings on the Martial Arts!"

"I have been teaching you in that way since the moment you arrived," responded the teacher.

"How and when?" the student asked, puzzled.

"When you bring tea, I drink. When you bring food, I eat. You bow, and I return it. When have I not been teaching?!"

Another student spoke up, "What are the teachings of the great masters of the Martial Arts who have come before you?"

"Don't hurt one another. Be kind, and free the mind from its limitations," the teacher said.

“Even a five year old child can say that!” replied the student.

“That may be true, but can you live it?” the teacher quickly returned.

One of the teachers called out, “Oh, students, why is the moon more important than the sun?” For a moment there was silence.

“We don’t know. Why?” a student questioned.

“Because we need more light at night.”

Everyone laughed, which created a feeling of affection in the room.

“Teachers, is it possible for a human being to be perfect?”

“Oh, yes,” a teacher replied.

“How?” enquired the student.

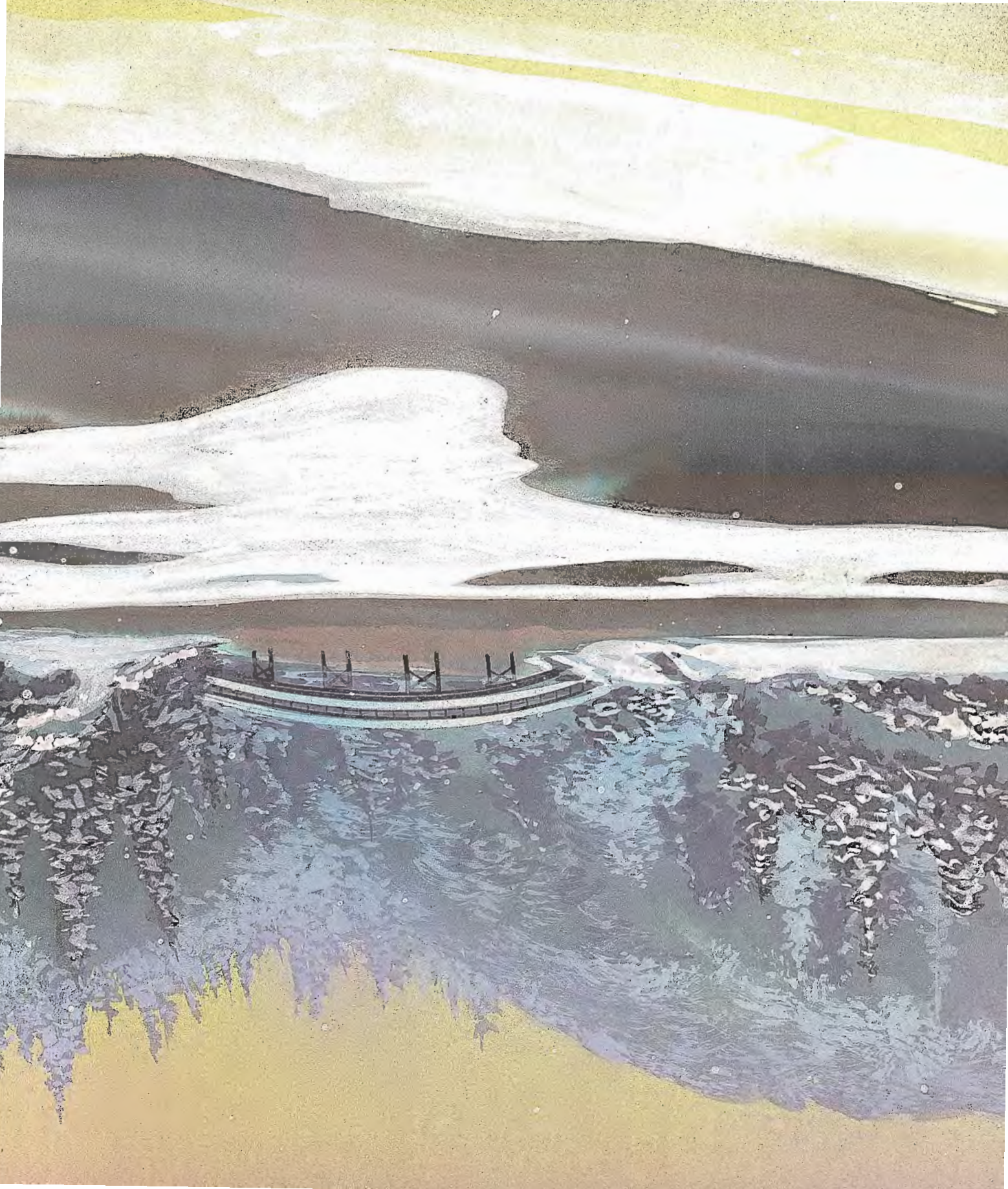
“The perfect person knows that he or she is imperfect.”

These sessions were always a delight to all. They might end very quietly, after only a few questions had been answered — or they might go on long into the night.

One time a student in the back called out, “I’m sorry I cannot hear you from here!” Whereupon the teacher called out, “Open the window and let the sounds from the outside come in. Maybe then you will hear me better.”

*Have you ever watched a flower by the roadside?
It exists, it lives in the sun, in the wind,
in the beauty of light and color;
it does not say to you,
"Come and smell me, enjoy me, look at me."
It lives and its very action of living is love.*

— J. Krishnamurti





The Beauty of Form

It was a stormy winter day with huge icicles hanging from trees and snow drifting up to the windows. A young woman approached her teacher with a concern. She was a gentle girl, polite and kind. She especially loved the animals at camp and always volunteered to care for them. She would never wish to hurt anyone or anything.

“Dear teacher, I am afraid I will hurt someone or be hurt by another when we practice our combat free forms together. I find myself holding back and letting the others come at me. I can’t seem to stand up to their power, especially the energy of the young men. As a young child, I was taught that fighting was wrong, that the Martial Arts were violent. I have found out that this is not true, that the Martial Arts can open the way to gentleness. But when I practice free forms, I am fearful. What can I do?”

The elderly woman chief instructor paused a long time before answering. “Student, I understand your concern. I too felt as you do when I was young. The key is to give full power to what you do by forgetting who you think you are. I can only show this to you by demonstration.”

The teacher walked with her student over to the practice wall on which were placed a row of beaten looking bags designed for punching and striking. They were dark and stained from thousands of poundings over the years. They had been restuffed numerous times. The girl had used them before, but only half-heartedly, afraid of being too aggressive.

“Now stand in front of this one here,” the teacher instructed. “Concentrate on your form only. Do not think about

hitting the target. Move slowly, aware of every movement. Watch your hips; don't extend too far. Focus on the point of impact and then immediately release. Just concentrate on the form! Don't worry about the target. Just form!" the teacher urged.

The student repeated the movement over and over, each time performing it more correctly, faster. The movement began to happen naturally. She didn't even notice the bag, the targeted goal in front of her. Her attention was fully placed on the form, nothing but the form.

"Faster, faster, watch your form, don't leave the form! Concentrate! Faster," the teacher urged her student.

The movements were sharp, powerful, and explosive. Each strike was free of any restraint, each movement perfectly timed.

"Faster, form, faster, form," the teacher repeated over and over.

Wham! Wham! Wham! the girl's fist struck the soiled bag again and again. Harder and harder she hit until the impact could be heard outside by students passing by. Wham! Wham! Her body was coordinated to the rhythm of the cadence. Suddenly she became aware of the power of her strikes as she pounded the bag. She was thoroughly caught up in the movement and was at that point beyond herself — beyond fear, beyond aggression, and beyond violence. There was only the beauty of the form. Nothing else!



*The enemy is fear.
We think it is hate,
but it is fear.*

— Gandhi

Always Beginning

The exquisitely formed spider's web was torn down when the window was opened to air out the practice hall. The spider was erecting a new one immediately, spinning a fresh net from its own body.

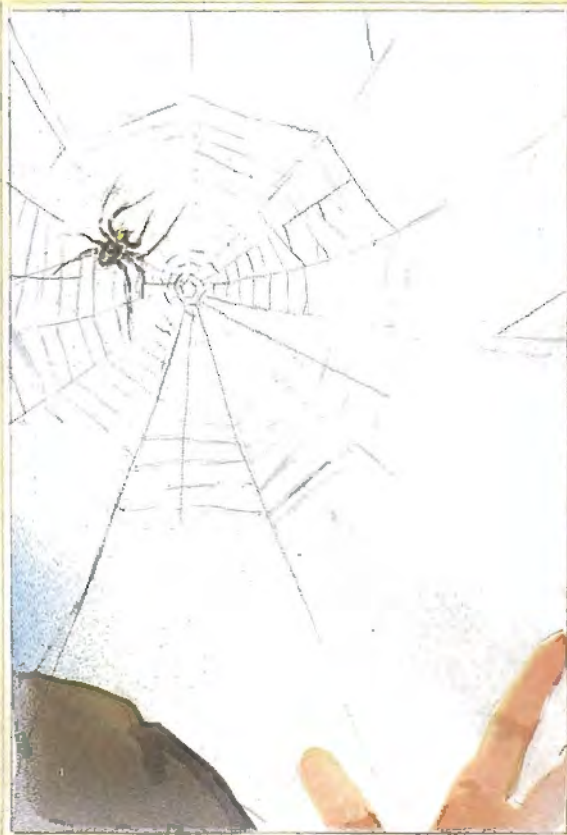
"Do you see that spider?" the teacher enquired softly, as if not to disturb the spider's work. "Watch how it works, see how it repeats the same basic work over and over, tirelessly going about its job.

"Your job, students, is to always be a beginner, like this spider building its endless web, again and again. Being a beginner means that you have the patience to practice the basics each day, for it is upon basics that everything else is built. Often students want to progress too early to complicated forms, to demonstrate spectacular feats of physical agility, speed, and showmanship. Basics can become boring. Being a beginner, dear students, is difficult, not because it takes effort but because it doesn't. Students would rather practice weapons or compete with others, but if they lose the basic essence of the Martial Arts, they lose the ability to be new, fresh, a beginner.

"There is an old saying, 'Try it for five minutes and if you don't like it, try it for ten more, and if you still don't like it, try it for even longer and after a while you will find out that you really like it a lot.'"

*Hast thou named all the birds
without a gun?
Loved the wood-rose
and left it on its stalk?*

— Emerson



No Sound You Can Hear — No Image You Can See

The student was about to punch when he found himself on the mat, surprised but not hurt. How could this have happened? His stepping punch was invincible; it had always worked before. He was incredibly quick and could always score with his well-worked-out technique. His opponent had come in just as he was thinking of attacking and had somehow swept him off his feet!

This student also had a formidable spinning back kick, especially for opponents who liked to come in on him. He would create an opening by faking a high punch, leaving himself wide open. As his opponent began to take advantage of this opening, he would spin with a fast back kick to counter. It was a sure winner.

He was back up again. The two students slowly circled each other. He saw his opening and faked his punch. “Oh, no!” he said out loud as he flew through the air and landed on his back again! He never saw it coming. He jumped up quickly in order to meet his opponent again and was about to charge forward with a thrusting front kick when — at that very moment of anticipation — his opponent was on top of him, jamming his kick and scoring with a reverse punch.

“You have a well-developed sixth sense,” the teacher told the student’s opponent. “Can you see what has happened here?” he said to the two of them and to the class.

“Teacher, I tried my best technique, but every time I was about to attack, I was dumped.”

“What did you do to defeat yourself?” the teacher asked.

“Defeat myself? I don’t understand. I was doing everything to win!” the student replied.

“Please stand up,” the teacher directed. “Now attack me! Don’t hesitate, just do it!”

The student moved toward the teacher and in a fraction of a second he was down on his back again. With good spirits, he jumped up quickly and asked, “How did you do that? How did you know what I was going to do?”

“Because you told me!”

“I didn’t say anything, Teacher. I only thought it. Can you read my thoughts?” he asked.

“Yes and no. I cannot see into your mind but I can see what your thoughts are by how you display them. For instance, just before you are ready to attack, your eyes narrow slightly and your mouth becomes tense. This is a sign that you are about to move. Then, you usually look at your intended target — for instance, at your opponent’s chest. So now I have two pieces of information, two clues as to what is going to happen. One is that you are going to move and the other is where you intend to strike.”

“Please, tell me more. This is amazing. I never realized that I did this!”

“You also tell me what technique you are going to use. For example, if you are intending a stepping punch, you start to tense your right leg for springing forward. Also, if you are about to use your effective spinning back kick, which everyone is well aware of, you let your opponent know this by dipping your right shoulder in preparation. All those small signs add up to tell your opponent a lot about you.”

“But how come no one before today had seen this and defeated me?”

“Some people have not yet developed this sixth sense. Some may see but are too slow to respond. But if a person practices awareness, over time he or she will begin to develop this capacity. It’s really not that difficult,” the teacher told him. “We will try two small experiments so you can see this for yourself. Please freestyle with your opponent again, but this time go slower and stop when I tell you.”

This time the student was more aware of himself, but in an awkward, self-conscious way. As he was about to move again, his teacher yelled, “Stop!”

“Now what just happened? Did you see anything? Please, you other students watching, join in.”

The student he was fighting spoke up first. “Your face became tense. This was the first signal.”

“Do it again,” the teacher commanded. And each time there was a signal, the teacher stopped the match and someone pointed the signal out. After a while, the student himself began to notice when he tensed his face, or gave another sign of his intentions.

In the next experiment, the teacher had this student face a large mirror and shadow fight an invisible opponent. The teacher would call out when the student was to attack, and when he did, the student began to notice how he signaled his intentions — how he dropped his shoulder, moved his foot, tensed his face, or gave some other tiny message.

“You see, students, how this is crucial to your free form. You see how you can defeat yourself before you start. If your opponent has developed this sixth sense, he or she will be in a



state of readiness. You, on the other hand, will be at a great disadvantage. In the Martial Arts, there is an expression, ‘See the unseeable and hear the unheard’ — which means be aware of what the other is not aware of and act before he or she does. This is important, not only in free form but in daily life. If you can stop conflict before it happens, then you are mastering the real intent of the Martial Arts: to end conflict.

“See how this works in your daily relationships — for instance, when someone is about to attack you verbally. This is an important skill to develop in every area of life: the skill of observation and deduction. By seeing what others are not aware of and being able to understand subtle signals, you can be a winner without ever having to fight!”

The students all bowed to end the class. And the two students who had free-styled together shook hands and smiled.

*To see the world in a grain of sand
And Heaven in a wild flower,
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand
And eternity in an hour.*

— William Blake

The Image of the Martial Artist

“Your side goes first,” the instructor said to the group on the left. “You represent what most people think that Martial Artists are.”

The students on the left acted out the words that one of the students recited: “chop-happy, brick-breaking, chest-thumping, breast-beating, head-bashing, knuckle-busting, flesh-ripping, joint-crunching, eye-gouging, back-breaking, teeth-loosening, nose-bloodying, gut-wrenching, lip-bursting, arm-twisting, bone-crushing, ear-biting, rib-cracking, skin-bruising, knee-scraping, groin-kicking, night-stalking, warlike, bizarre, terrifying, brutish, savage, monstrous, possessed, crazed, barbarian, demonic screaming evil beast!”

The whole camp broke out into laughter. They laughed until their sides hurt. With tears in their eyes, they applauded the group.

“Students,” the teacher said, wiping tears of laughter from his own eyes, “that is the funniest presentation I’ve ever seen. Congratulations.”

After the room had calmed down, the other chief instructor commented, “Unfortunately, students, that is the view that many people have of the Martial Arts — and more unfortunately, it is somewhat true. It is this view of the Martial Arts that has been magnified and presented to the general public. And it is our job as Martial Artists to change this image, to present the Martial Arts as they were intended. But our job will be difficult if it is as bad as you say!” The students broke into laughter at this last comment.

“Now, let’s hear from the other group. Each of you has had time to think and write about what the Martial Arts mean to you. One student has taken your papers, compared them, and come up with a list of what you as a group have to say.”

“Teachers and students, we feel that the Martial Arts, taught in the right way, should be part of the curriculum of every school in the world! We feel that these disciplines provide an excellent way for young people like ourselves to understand conflict,” the spokesperson for this group announced. “Here is our combined account of how we see the ‘other side’ of the Martial Arts, what we feel is the true picture.

“To us, the Martial Arts represent: honor, loyalty, bravery, trust, health, happier lives, harmony, positive energy, respect, peace, spirit, unity, improvement, hope, leadership, caring, understanding, dedication, lifelong commitment, friendship, enjoyment, physical fitness, sharing, strong mind and body, fun, excellence, achievement, kindness, honesty, and love.”

When the student ended, all the students and teachers applauded. The applause went on for a long while. Then slowly the room quieted. For a moment, no one spoke. Then one of the teachers broke the silence, “That was wonderful! I just wish other people could hear what you’ve said. I’m so happy to be involved in this wonderful art. Some people think of the Martial Arts only as self-defense or sport, but those are very small parts. The Martial Arts, as you have stated so well, can help improve the quality of human life, and bring about peace and well-being throughout the world. It is so sad that the first view prevails. But we know that the people who hold this view have been misinformed. Someday I hope you students will open schools, run camps, and teach these great arts as they should



be taught. Then the world will see that there is something very fine in what we do. Thank you all for your presentations tonight. You have given all of us something to think about.”

The students and teachers quietly left the practice hall and walked in small groups through the cold, wintery night snow to their warm cabins. That night, every person thought deeply about the evening’s gathering. Occasionally students would laugh softly in their bunks, imagining what other people think they are doing at Martial Arts camp.

***Thou cannot stir a flower
without troubling a star.***

— Francis Thompson



Martial Arts for Peace

“Who is your enemy?” the teacher asked strongly. “How do we create the enemy?” That night they took a silent nature walk through the forest to the frozen river. Sitting by waterfalls of icicles hanging like gigantic claws, and watching water running underneath ice, they felt at one with the world around them.

At the lake, they walked out on thick ice, pondering where the fish of summer had gone. How incredible the changes of seasons are! The blaze of summer fun: swimming, hiking and boating. The joy of autumn’s brilliant leaves mixed with the melancholy of summer’s end; days growing shorter; animals preparing for cold. Then winter: time for reflection; nature pulling inward. And again, that first tiny flower heralding spring; the sense of renewal and rebirth; the shedding of winter coats and boots, scarves and hats; spring birds returning to nest; the softening of the earth; and the feeling that summer is again approaching!

Back at camp, in the old, polished practice hall, the students gathered to talk with their teachers.

“Who is your enemy?” the teacher asked again. The students reflected on this question, one that personally affected them all.

This season, students from all over the world arrived at the camp to visit and practice with the regular students. Some were from a large powerful country a great distance away, a country that was feared by the regular students who attended the Martial Arts camp. It had just been reported on the news that civil war had broken out in that country. Citizen fought

against citizen; families were divided into warring groups; brothers were killing brothers. The suffering was immense! Visiting students from this country at war were very afraid; they didn't know if their families were safe. Other visiting students were also from nations at war. In fact, most had come to the Martial Arts camp specifically to learn about conflict and war.

"War is terrible! I wish I was a leader of the world. I would outlaw war! If people wanted to fight, I'd have them removed to an island where they could fight it out with each other!" said one of the visiting students with a heavy foreign accent.

"I have seen war," another declared. "I am from a country where we are torn apart by differences. One group claims to have the right to be there, that their ancestors were native to the country. The other group claims they have the right, that they fought and won the country. And they are killing each other over this," the girl said with great emotion. "I come home from school past soldiers everywhere. One day I was walking down an alley when I heard gunfire and quickly ducked into a doorway. A group of masked men and boys came running through the alley with other armed people chasing them. Right in front of me, a boy was shot and killed. He was hit in the back and his blood splattered on my dress. I just stood there shaking and crying. I still have nightmares about it. My parents told me that a girl about my age had been stoned by the enemy and that this killing was revenge for the death of that girl. I asked them when this would all stop. And my mother answered that she didn't know, nobody knew. It had been going on for so long that no one knew any longer how and why it had even started.

It kept on going — one death — revenge — another death — revenge, and on and on!”

All the students listened intently to this girl who was visiting the camp from so far away. There was great emotion in the room.

“I have seen death too. In my country we are also torn apart by differences. I don’t understand why we cannot get along. Children start taking sides, then they too get caught up in the violence. It is so strange, each side thinking that what they are doing is for the good of humanity, and each person feeling that God is on their side. Each sees the other as the enemy, the bad one. People don’t see themselves as the enemy, only the other person, or other group. I wonder why we do this. Why do we create the enemy?”

“What if I told you that the solution to all this violence, killing and war can be found in the study of the Martial Arts? Would you believe me? I hope not! I hope you question everything I say!” the teacher exclaimed. “Or would you say that this cannot be true? That I am being foolish, that no one can understand the problems of conflict and end them — *especially* a Martial Artist. And who do you think can solve our problems of conflict? The authorities, the politicians, the scholars, the leaders of nations, the generals? Or do we each find out for ourselves?”

“Teacher, I don’t mean to be rude, but I really don’t see how the Martial Arts can solve the enormous problems of war!” one of the visitors said with emotion.

“Let’s look at this together. Let’s find out if there is any truth in the statement that the solution to violence can be found in the Martial Arts. For if there is truth in this





statement, then what we are studying here together can have a great and important effect in the world. Will you at least look at this with me? The answer to the question of what creates conflict between people, even on the national level, may be a lot simpler than you think,” the teacher ventured.

“We have already looked at how people have separated themselves because of old tribal associations carried over from the past. We discussed how and why we human beings have divided ourselves into groups of nations, races, and special groups that have different belief systems. We have seen how this creates conflict in relationship, that a world divided *is* conflict, that we *prevent* peace by holding on to our special identities. This doesn’t mean that we must all look, eat, dress, and be alike. Cultural differences are natural and can be enriching. Belief systems are the problem; belief systems create and prolong conflict.”

“Yes, I see that. But why don’t most adults see it? Why can a young person like me see what an adult can’t?” another student spoke up.

“I do think that you students are able to see this more easily than most adults. Adults have been conditioned not to see. You remember that word ‘conditioning,’ how the brain is programed to think in certain ways. For instance, mice in a cage can be trained by using rewards, like food — or punishment, like electric shock. These are simple examples of conditioning that we all understand.”

“So what creates war in my country? Why is there so much hate and fear?” the student who had seen the boy killed asked.

“Your country’s war is every country’s war. It has been the same since the beginning of war. This problem is one that all human beings face. If we can look at it this way, then we will be less likely to blame someone else. *We* are our own enemy; *we* create our own problems, and then we find ways to blame others! This blaming is prejudice against the other, the enemy. Few people are able to look at the problem at the root,” the teacher continued.

“But what should we do? I don’t want to see anyone else killed. I hate war!” the same girl replied. “What can I do when I go back home?”

“Talk with anyone who will listen! I have found Martial Artists to be interested in understanding conflict. Try to talk to your parents, teachers and friends. Ask them to look at how we create the enemy! Discuss how the brain has been conditioned over the centuries to think and act in ways that separate human beings from each other. Talk about how each group fears other groups because they are afraid for their own survival.

“This problem, this divided view of the world, has been carried on for so long. Most people have accepted it as unchangeable. We are like the caged bird with the door open. The bird has been living in its prison for so long that it doesn’t know anything else. It can’t see the door to freedom because it sees only the bars of its cage. Do you understand what I mean?”

“I think so,” the girl replied thoughtfully.

“Look at the person who has been called your enemy. See that he or she fears you for the same reasons you fear him or her. See that as the fear gets greater, the conflict worsens. Instead of changing our ways of thinking, we cling even more

tenaciously to our separate beliefs and therefore create more violence. The really terrible thing is that these people who cling to groups in the hopes of survival are the very people who are threatening survival, not only for themselves but for everyone. Can you see this? Not because I have told you, but because you can actually see this truth for yourself. Division creates conflict! It's actually so simple that we don't see it — like the man looking for the glasses which are on his nose. He is looking through them while looking for them! Some people will say that it is much more complicated than that. Look to see if this is true or not. Now, what will you do?"

Everyone sat quietly for a few moments.

"We will discuss this some more. Think about this, question each other, question your teachers, find out. And question what place the Martial Arts have in all this," the teacher said earnestly.

***Rice in the bowl,
Water in the bucket.***

— Anonymous

No War, No More!

The cold rain beat against the windows. Today the snow had turned to rain; the crystal white ground became sloshy, frozen mud. The mood of the day was one of reflection.

“There is a story I want to tell you, for it points to something so simple yet so important, more important than most people realize. It’s a story of two countries at war. These two countries feared and hated each other. They had been friends a long time ago but now they were enemies. Then one day the war ended and the enemies again became friends. The simple story goes like this....

“One day a sailing ship was lost at sea off the enemy’s coast. A storm had pushed the ship into heavily guarded, unfamiliar waters. The sailors feared what would happen if they were caught in enemy territory; it would surely mean death and suffering for them and for others.

“The ship had been damaged during the storm and most of its supplies had washed overboard. It would mean certain death if the crew tried to sail back to their own country. They would have to take a chance and sneak into some small harbor in their enemy’s country to fix their ship and refresh their supplies for the long voyage back to their homeland.

“It was night when the sailors saw coastline and the outline of a huge fort on a hill just above the entrance to a harbor. Lowering the ship’s sails, they put out every light aboard the ship and rowed their vessel past the fort. It was fortunate for them that it was a moonless and lonely night, with no other vessels about.

“The sun was just coming up when they recognized a landing by a small village. Slowly and with great care, they guided their ship into the dock with the hope of going ashore to obtain food and the necessary supplies to fix their ship. As they were tying up to the dock, they were surprised by a small group of armed townspeople. There were about as many townspeople as there were sailors. The sailors were frightened by this sudden surprise reception and were trained to fight, so they immediately took up their positions, armed with weapons. The townspeople gathered close to the dock. They too looked scared — but determined.

“A spokesperson for the town called out, ‘You are trespassing; this is our land! You are our enemy, and now you are our prisoners. Put down your weapons!’

“The captain of the ship looked coolly at this townspeople and at the people surrounding him. Other people from the town had now joined them but stayed safely in the background. Some of the young people had climbed up trees to get a better view. Two children had climbed to the top of the local meeting hall and were sitting precariously on the roof, watching the proceedings below. Others were looking out of the upper story windows of shops and houses.

“The sun was now well up, and the sky was turning from rose to blue. Birds began to move about but were strangely quiet, as if they sensed something foreboding was about to happen.

“The captain ventured, ‘I speak your language. I am not here to hurt you but only to get supplies and assistance for my damaged ship. We did not intend to come here. A storm at sea forced us to land. We do not want to fight, but we will not be



taken prisoner. We are armed to fight and we will to the death, but we will not be your prisoners,' the captain repeated firmly to the surrounding crowd.

"There was a long pause as each group stood ready to react to the slightest movement of the other. The spokesperson from the town repeated the demand, 'Put down your weapons; you are our prisoners. You have entered our territory and you are our enemy. We must protect our land and our people. You have no right here.'

"There was a deafening silence that seemed to last forever; no one moved. Weapons were ready.

"'I will give you 30 seconds to surrender,' the townspeople said with a firm but fearful voice. The townspeople behind him were not soldiers and were visibly scared, but were also determined to protect and defend their land, even to the death, against these people from another way of life. Hearing this last challenge, everyone — sailors and townspeople alike — readied their weapons for what was sure to be a bloody battle.

"The captain looked down from the ship's foredeck, turned to his crew and called out orders in his own language. The crew stiffened and readied their weapons, including two large cannons on deck, and aimed them at the small crowd below. There was terrific tension in the air! The captain raised his hand to command his sailors to shoot when a terrified scream came from behind the townspeople. The townspeople turned out of instinct — as did the sailors — to a child's cry for help.

A very young boy had fallen from the roof of the town's meeting hall and was dangling by his belt from a rain gutter, shrieking and crying for help.

“Everyone froze, looking at this boy and the danger he was in. At any moment, the fragile drainpipe could break, sending him to a probable death.

“The captain, sailors and townspeople were suddenly drawn together in this emergency. All attention was riveted on the young boy hanging high atop the building.

“A woman screamed in terror, ‘My son, my son! Save him, somebody save him!’ as she rushed over to the building with her arms held upwards to catch the dangling child should he fall at that moment.

“They all hesitated. Then suddenly one of the townspeople put down his weapon and yelled, ‘Come on, let’s save him!’ Everyone dropped their weapons, including the sailors, and ran — foreigners and all — to the base of that tall building.

“At first there was a commotion with people running in every direction giving orders, looking for ladders, and trying to calm the mother of the screaming child who swayed dangerously above. The captain of the ship and the town’s spokesperson came face-to-face at the foot of the meeting hall. They eyed each other cautiously for a few seconds. Then the captain motioned to the crowd to get upon his shoulders. At first they didn’t understand, until someone yelled, ‘Make a human ladder!’ Then with swift recognition, the town’s spokesperson climbed atop the shoulders of the captain. Then a sailor climbed up, then a townspeople. And so it went — townspeople, sailor, townspeople, sailor — a human ladder up the face of that tall building, until they reached a ledge that one of the sailors could grab. He climbed up one last story on his own to the edge of the roof, close to the dangling, crying child, but the sailor could not reach him. With great effort, the young sailor pulled himself up

and over the gutter and onto the sloping roof. Everyone was looking up with held breath. The sailor slowly and carefully made his way over to the boy, reached out, and grabbed him by his belt. Then, with a hard, strong tug, he pulled the boy free and threw his other arm around him to the great cheers and yells of a relieved and grateful crowd below.

“The sailor carefully made his way back to the edge, and with the boy now held in one arm, he lowered himself down over the roof to the ledge below and then to the waiting hands of the human ladder. Each person on the ladder carefully handed the sobbing boy down to the next, and finally to his mother on the ground. Then the sailor lowered himself down the human ladder, as did each person in turn, until they were all safely on the ground. People were cheering, laughing, crying, hugging. Sailors hugged townspeople; townspeople hugged sailors. Caught up in the celebration, and not immediately recognizing each other, the captain and spokesperson hugged with brotherly compassion and love.

“As they were hugging each other, they suddenly became aware of whom they were embracing, and froze — looking intently at each other, arms around one another. There was silence as everyone remembered their perilous situation. For a tense moment, the old images of enemies came forth, from all the years of fear and hatred between the two countries. The two looked deeply at each other. And as quickly as the fear had appeared, it disappeared. The captain and the spokesperson each laughed out loud and gave one another a grand hug. Laughing and crying, the two former enemies embraced!



“‘We thank you,’ said the town’s spokesperson to the captain. ‘You helped save one of our children!’

“With affection in his voice, the captain responded, ‘This child is like my own son. I have four children and they are much like your children. All children are my children! All children are your children!’

“‘Why do we fight; why do we hate each other?’ enquired the town’s spokesperson. ‘You are like us. You care for your children as we do. We are not so different, you and I.’

“Suddenly a townsperson called out, ‘But we sent for our soldiers.’

“‘Oh, no!’ the spokesperson exclaimed.

“A wave of fear ran through the group, old images flaring up for a moment.

“‘Wait, I’ve got it,’ cried the town’s spokesperson. ‘We will help our friends. Let’s get them the supplies they need and the materials to mend their ship. Hurry! It will take some time for the soldiers to get here, but we must hurry. Captain, quickly tell us what you need!’

“The captain responded, ‘Good, we are friends and forever we’ll be friends!’ He told the storekeepers and the ship builder what was needed. The townspeople gathered food, clothing, medical supplies and tools to help their friends.

“Finally the ship was stocked with all the sailors needed and then some. Everyone gathered at the dock.

“‘How will you get past the fort? You may miss the soldiers, but the fort has also been notified and will blow your ship out of the water as it passes,’ said one of the townspeople.

“‘Quick, let’s get into all the boats we can find. Put up the sails, grab your oars. We will escort our friends out ourselves.

The fort will not fire if we surround the ship with our boats,' the town's spokesperson responded.

"And this is exactly what they did. The townspeople escorted the larger ship out past the fort. Not a shot was fired. When the boats were out of firing distance from the fort, the captain called out, 'Goodbye, my friends. Perhaps someday all of our people will learn what we have learned here today. I will tell my family and friends at home what has happened. Maybe there is hope for us yet!'

"The people from the town were waving their hands in the air and shouting friendly farewells. The town's spokesperson called out, 'We will never forget this.'

"It is said that they remained friends. Each went back to their homeland and told their strange and wonderful story, over and over. The captain and the spokesperson wrote to each other for years afterward. The captain left the navy to become a teacher of young children. The town's spokesperson traveled far and wide to talk to others about peace. The two stayed friends all their lives, and so did their children, and their children's children — generation after generation, they remained friends."

There was a pause. The teacher looked intently at each of the students.

"Students, war seems like it will be here forever because it has been with us for so long. But as you can see by this story, peace can happen in a flash! People who have been enemies can become friends — if they can, just for a moment, forget who their enemy is. Find out how conflict happens and you will see that you can step out of it in no time at all," the teacher concluded.

Outside, the storm had passed and the sun was shining through spaces of blue. Every tree and leaf was glistening with droplets of rain. The cat yawned and stretched in the warmth by the large fireplace.

*Among twenty snowy mountains
the only moving thing
was the eye of the black bird.*

— Wallace Stevens

Together We Can Change the World

“Today I want to tell you something; please listen. The black belts in the camp are the best Martial Artists here. They are superior to the lower belts. I repeat, black belts are superior; the other belts are inferior,” the teacher said at the start of the class.

The students looked surprised at these comments from their teacher. They had been taught that all the students were respected equally as people. There were differences in ability and experience, but these differences did not separate them as friends or as fellow students. Of course, everyone had respect for the higher-ranked students and teachers. There was an order to the levels and certain earned privileges went with each earned rank. But no one ever felt that he or she was a better person than another. And this is what the teachers always taught. But today something strange was brewing.

“You lower belts are only allowed in the dining hall after the black belts have eaten. Your chores for the week will be to wait on the black belts, do their dishes, clean their rooms, and so on. Your specific chores will be posted in the main hall.”

“Excuse me teacher, but I don’t understand why there are new rules. You teach us to be fair, but this sounds like you are making the black belts a preferred group,” one of the senior students commented seriously. The students had always been allowed to question the teachers politely and with respect, so this statement was quite acceptable.

“We teachers have been talking it over and we have come to the conclusion that the black belts deserve to be a special group. So you will do as we say,” the teacher replied firmly.

Classes went on that morning as usual, with students practicing forms and self-defense techniques. But discontent among the students was noticeable.

At lunch some of the lower belts were stopped from entering the dining hall at the usual time. They were reminded that the black belts were allowed to eat first because they had superior rank. After lunch, many of the lower belts were assigned to clean up the hall and wash the dishes. Black belts could be seen relaxing and reading.

Special privileges for black belts went on for several days, until one day at lunch a fight broke out — which was extremely unusual at the camp.

“He called me inferior, a low belt. I answered that without the belts we were both the same. He laughed and ordered me to wash his dishes. I refused, so he tried to force me. So I shoved him, accidentally knocking over the dishes. That’s when we got into it,” the boy said with tears in his eyes. Later that night another incident happened.

“Hey, come here you; it’s your job to clean my room,” the black-belted girl had said to a younger girl with a brown belt.

“Clean your own room. I’m not your servant,” the younger girl replied defiantly.

“Do push-ups or I’ll tell on you!” said the black belt.

“Push-ups! Forget it. I’m not doing anything more for you or any other black belt. I’m sick of this,” the younger girl shot back.



A special meeting was called that night by the lower belts. The whole camp attended, teachers too. The camp had a policy that if someone wanted to discuss an issue that concerned the whole camp, that person could call an Open Forum.

There was grumbling and complaining in the meeting hall. The lower belts sat on one side of the room, the black belts on another, and the teachers sat at the back. The teachers tried to stay out of general disagreements if they could so that the students themselves could learn to work issues out together. In an Open Forum anyone could speak, as long as he or she held the “staff.” The staff was an old, polished piece of wood that had once been used as a self-defense weapon. This allowed one person at a time to talk without being interrupted.

The Open Forum would start when all the students had arrived. Black belts were taunting lower belts. “Tattletails, inferiors,” they called across the room. This had never happened at the camp before. There had been disagreements, some serious ones, but mutual respect had always prevailed.

Finally all the students arrived and the meeting began.

“We don’t like your superior attitude,” one lower belt spoke out. “We don’t think the way we’re being treated is fair. We are not inferior; we are just people. It hurts to be treated disrespectfully like we have been. This camp has changed. It was a place where respect was shown to others, no matter what rank or background.”

“Why are you so hurt?” said one of the senior black belts. “We *are* a special group. We *are* superior to you and we should have special privileges. When and if you become as good as we are, then you too will be in the black belt group.”

“That isn’t fair,” the lower belt group agreed in unison.

“But that is the way the world is; life isn’t fair. There are people who have it and those who don’t. What do you expect us to do, change the world? We are just getting the most for ourselves like everyone else does. That’s the name of the game,” a senior black belt replied.

“Yes, that is unfortunately the way many people treat others, but that wasn’t the way it was here — before all these new rules were made. We didn’t even have a say in making the rules!” the spokesperson from the lower belts returned.

“What makes you think that you deserve to be treated equally? And what makes you think that you can change the way people think out there, in the real world?” said one of the black belts in a sarcastic voice.

“I can only speak for myself, but I think that everyone would agree, and I think you black belts would agree too — or would have, a few days ago at least — that we must create a better world here at camp no matter what goes on outside, in what you call the ‘real’ world. The real world isn’t real; it is based on false premises. The world here has always been real: genuine and honest. That is what we are taught, and that is what we live. When we first came to the camp, most of us expected simply to be taught self-defense skills — but then we found out that there is much more to the Martial Arts than that. This is about being a gentle, kind, and intelligent person, one who wants to understand and end conflict, personally and in the world. Before coming to this camp, I — and I’m sure many of us — wouldn’t have thought that we could live like this... as true friends, helping each other, learning about ourselves and how we create conflict, working together to truly

understand. And now we see that this wonderful way of life is being threatened and we don't like it," the lower belt said with feeling.

"Well, lower belt, you are right," the senior black belt replied gently, smiling with genuine affection. "You are absolutely right and we all agree with you." At that moment the group of black belts stood up, along with the teachers, and applauded the standing spokesperson and the group of lower belts.

"You have done well and we're sorry that we have been so mean to you, but we were instructed to show you how it feels to take away those aspects of life that we care so much about here: dignity, freedom, equality. It was hard for us to be unfriendly, even hateful. We're sorry, but we felt that there was an important lesson to be learned, for all of us."

The spokesperson for the lower belts at first seemed shocked, then angry — then finally she smiled, realizing they had indeed learned a painful but important lesson.

"Remember, a few weeks ago, when the black belts asked the lower belts if they valued their education here?" the senior blackbelt asked. "Well, of course you said you did, but we felt that those were respectful words rather than real feeling. Now we have had a powerful demonstration of your understanding and respect for the Martial Arts."

"No, maybe you were right," the spokesperson replied thoughtfully. "Maybe we didn't fully appreciate what we had until we felt it being taken away from us. I cannot speak for my fellow students, but I for one thank you for teaching us this lesson. I think I now know what humility means."

The Open Forum ended with a party. The black belts had secretly arranged for refreshments and a large cake with the inscription:

“Together we can
change the world.”

*Between the washing bowls
of birth and death
All these words
What a waste of breath.*

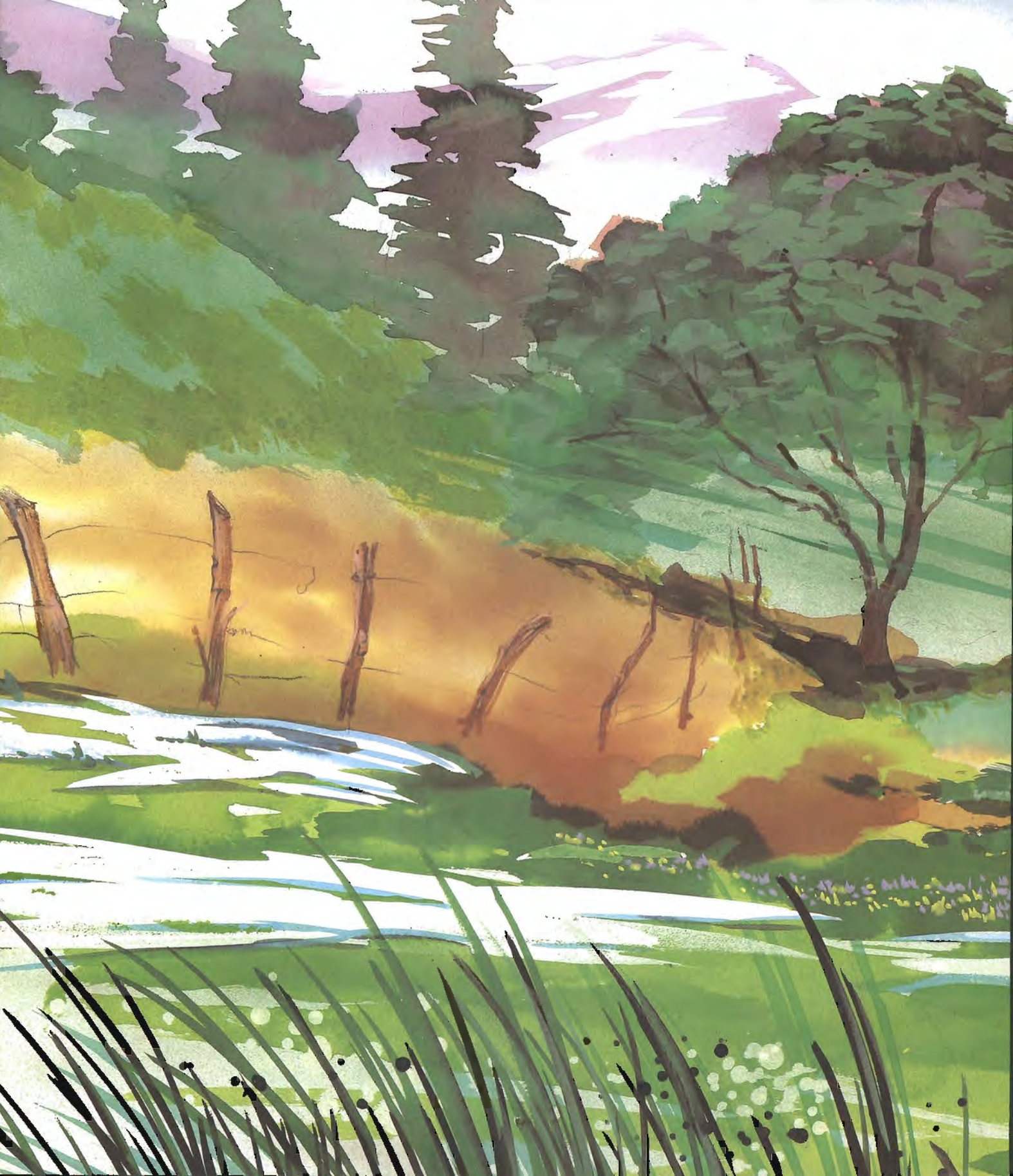
— Issa

Through the Eyes of the Golden Eagle

The student bent down to look at this first fragile early spring flower. How delicate it was, so vulnerable, so beautiful. There was still some snow on the ground and the day was cold, but something new and uplifting was in the air — a lightness, like the sun shining after a storm. The days were slowly, minute by minute, getting longer. What had been dormant was coming to life. Rabbits appeared and even an old groundhog had been seen. Finally, the long winter was waning, giving way to the cycle of rebirth.

As the student examined the tiny flower, he felt part of this natural cycle — that nature was inside him and outside him. There was no difference between the feeling he was having at that moment, and that which was causing the feeling! It was all one movement: the flower, the air, the sky, the earth, the student, the feeling.

It was as if the whole scene was suddenly being seen from a “bird’s-eye view”... The eyes looking closely at that flower were looking at the same time from high above, as if the student were also a golden eagle soaring free, above all the suffering and fear, violence and conflict — flying above yet still on earth, fondly watching that fragile early spring flower! He was there and yet he was not there. He was — all at the same time — the student observing the flower, the flower, and the eyes of the golden eagle above. And for that brief but everlasting moment, he understood life and its meaning.





“How simple!” he thought to himself. “It’s so simple,” he heard himself say, *“and it has been here all the time. Where was I looking?”*

“Students, it’s time to end this season’s camp... but please realize that this is just the beginning. We have said so much already, so we won’t talk for long now. There is only one concern we teachers have, one wish — you might say, and that is that you reflect on how you can apply what you have learned and lived here at camp to your lives at home,” the chief instructor said to the attentive group.

“We know that much of what we have taught here will take you a while to understand — but be patient. Realize that you *can* understand the deepest lessons of the Martial Arts, and you *can* understand conflict. Human beings create conflict and we can end it. Indeed, this is our task as Martial Artists: to understand and end conflict. All we ask is for you to question this, to think deeply about it, and to see for yourself what is true. If we have found truth, then we have discovered something wonderful!

“Don’t forget how we have lived together here. Take all this home with you. It may be difficult for you at first, because many people will tell you different things. They may tell you that you can’t understand conflict. They may say that you are too young to understand so much. But just keep on looking, thinking, and talking — and someday, we hope, teaching. For if you really want to find out, you can. Life is not cruel; it will show you how to live. And then it’s up to you... but beware. There are hurricanes that can knock you down, mazes that will confuse you, and Fire Dragons that can consume you. Just stay

strong and seek the truth. That truth will set you free to fly like a golden eagle, free from self-created cages that would keep you in bondage. Do you understand, dear, dear students?"

Everyone bowed deeply, with great respect for each person there. The whole camp shared a community dinner together of international food cooked by the students. After the meal, goodbyes were exchanged with much hugging, crying and laughing. Addresses were exchanged and continued friendships pledged. The evening slowly ended with everyone returning in friendly groups, arm-in-arm, to their cabins. Tomorrow they would be returning to their everyday worlds, changed human beings who would, in turn, make a change in others.

*The world is after all
As the butterfly
however that may be.*

— Soin



The beginning —