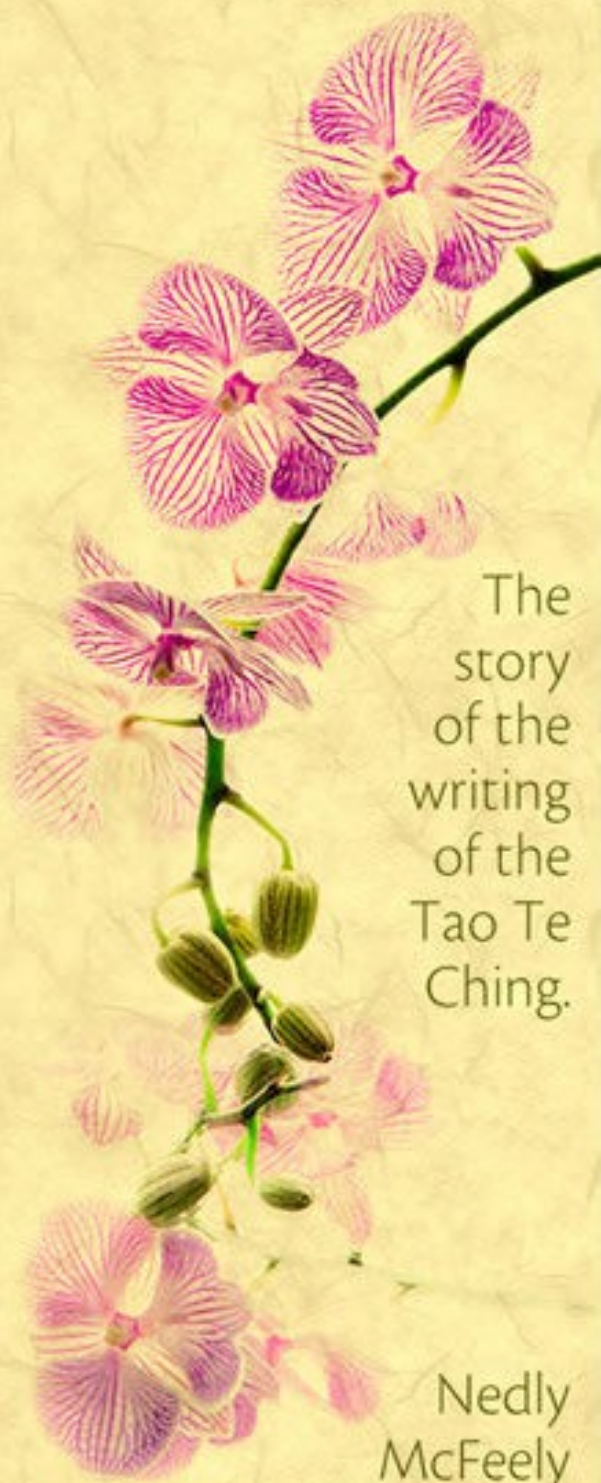


THE TAO
of the
LARGE-
BREASTED
GODDESS
with the
SHAPELY
BEHIND

The
story
of the
writing
of the
Tao Te
Ching.

Nedly
McFeely





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THE TAO OF THE LARGE-BREASTED
GODDESS WITH THE SHAPELY BEHIND

*The Story
of the Writing
of the Tao Te Ching*

A Play in Six Acts

by

Ned "Tailwind" McFeely

CHARACTERS

| | |
|----------|----|
| Lao Tzu | 77 |
| Bubby | ?? |
| Yin | 44 |
| Yang | 33 |
| Old Lady | 88 |

PLACE

Border, Western China

TIME

500 BC

INTRODUCTION

LEGEND HAS IT that late in life, Chinese sage Lao Tzu got on his water buffalo and rode westward out of China. At the border, he was stopped and asked to write down his teachings before leaving.

What follows is the true account of the events surrounding the writing of *The Tao Te Ching*...

ACT I: THE TAO THAT CAN BE TOLD

In an isolated guard shack on China's mountainous western border, two soldiers in their mid-thirties, YIN and YANG, sit face to face playing a very focused game of Pinky Touch, the rules of which are unclear. Neither man moves, both silently intent on their almost-touching little fingers. After thirty seconds, the frozen tableau bursts into activity as Yin leaps up in victory and Yang collapses in defeat.

YIN

I am the Lord-Emperor of Pinky-Touch!

YANG

Yeah, yeah. You win again, your imperial highness. I gotta take a leak.

YIN

On the other side of the pissing rock
this time, please.

YANG

Yeah, yeah.

returning a few moments later

Well, you don't see that every day.

YIN

See what?

YANG

An old man coming up through the pass
riding a water buffalo.

YIN

An old man coming up through the pass
riding a water buffalo heading out of
China? No one has passed this way in
fourteen years, and now we have an old
man coming up through the pass riding a
water buffalo heading out of China?
This calls for paperwork!

YANG

Do we have any paper left? I thought we
used it all for...

YIN

They sent us fresh papers with the last
resupply five years ago. I've been
hiding it.

*Yin and Yang are busy tidying up
for company when there's a knock
on the door. Yang rushes to
answer, Yin holds him back.*

YIN

quietly to Yang

Let's try to savor this.

YANG

quietly to Yin

Good idea! It could be fourteen years before we have another guest.

YIN

aloud, sing-song

Who's the-ere?

STRANGER

Just an old man and his Bubby seeking shelter for the night.

YANG

One minute, please. You caught us right in the middle of, uh, brushing our teeth.

*They open the door to find LAO
TZU standing outside holding the
reins of a water buffalo.*

LAO TZU

Oh wow, you guys are soldiers? Well, me and my Bubby were just passing through, and I thought we should stop in and say, you know, hi. Hi.

YIN

Hi. Actually, we're border guards. You're about to leave China.

LAO TZU

No shit?

YANG

No shit.

YIN

And there's actually some paperwork involved.

LAO TZU

No shit?

YANG

No shit. Not an everyday occurrence, an old man on a water buffalo leaving China.

YIN

Still, no bother, glad to have you. We'll sort you out and have you on your way in no time.

LAO TZU

Well, alright. Where can I park my...?

YIN

Ah, your Bubby, yes. Imperial Border Guard Second Class Yang will take care of her for you. Please step inside and have a seat.

Yang goes out to take care of Bubby. Yin and Lao Tzu sit across from each other at a table. Yin lays out his forms.

YIN

Alrighty then, let's get started. Name?

LAO TZU

Venerable Master.

YIN

Say what?

LAO TZU

Venerable Master.

YIN

Okay, we'll come back to that.
Occupation?

LAO TZU

Occupation?

YIN

Yes, what do you do?

LAO TZU

Well, that's a little tricky, I don't
actually do anything. I'm more of a Wu
Wei kind of guy.

*Yang returns from tending to
Bubby.*

YANG

What's Wu Wei?

LAO TZU

Oh, you know, uh, non-exertion,
basically. The spiritual art of not-
doing. It's harder than it sounds.

YANG

It would have to be.

YIN

I have a long list of jobs here,
friend, we just have to check a box.

Pig wrangler? Noodle bender? Tea-leaf reader?

LAO TZU

I'm just kind of, you know, a person.

YIN

checking list

Person, person... Sorry, not on the list.
Help me out here, I have to put
something down. Barefoot doctor?
Silkworm farmer? Foot binder? Poet?

LAO TZU

Oh, well, poet maybe. That sounds nice.

YANG

You're a poet?

LAO TZU

Yes.

YANG

Do you write poems?

LAO TZU

No, not really.

YANG

Then you're not a bloody poet, are ya?

YIN

Well then, I can't put that on the
form. What is it that you actually do
do?

LAO TZU

It's not really something I do, it's
more like what I am. I'm kind of like a
philosopher-at-large, a wandering sage.

YANG

I doubt that'll be on the list.

YIN

Yep, here it is! Sage comma wandering.

LAO TZU

Really?

YIN

Yeah, just after sadhu comma itinerant
and right before saint comma roaming.

LAO TZU

Oh, I see. You're having fun with me.

YANG

How about warrior? I bet that's on the
list.

LAO TZU

Sure, warrior is good, like poet-
warrior maybe.

YIN

It's more than my life is worth to say
an old man with no poems is a poet and
no weapon is a warrior. And anyway,
it's not on the list.

LAO TZU

How about Wise Man?

YANG

Wise Man?

LAO TZU

Yeah, like someone who goes around
spreading wisdom.

YIN

checking

Wise man, wise man... Uh yeah, that one actually is on the list. "Wise Man: Someone who goes around spreading wisdom." Wow. Is that really a thing?

LAO TZU

Well, there's no union or guild, but I guess it's a thing. It's on the list, right?

YIN

Yep, it's on the list.

YANG

Any money in the Wise Man game?

LAO TZU

Uh, no, not really. It's not like that.

YANG

Girls? Groupies? Hotshot friends? Get invited to all the best parties?

LAO TZU

Not so much.

YANG

Then it's just kind of, what, exactly?

LAO TZU

Just kind of its own thing, I guess.

YANG

Yeah? That's cool. Whaddaya go by? Wise man? Professor?

LAO TZU

Master is fine.

YANG

Nothing too hoity-toity. That's nice.

YIN

Well, your name is Venerable Master. I guess that should have tipped us off.

YANG

Wow, your parents were really shooting for the stars.

LAO TZU

Yeah, funny how that worked out.

YIN

Okay, okay, we're doing great, almost done. In your role as a, uh, wise man, what is it that you actually do?

LAO TZU

Do? Well, um, nothing really, you know, just be wise and stuff.

YIN

writing

Just be wise and stuff, got it. So you have an occupation in which you get paid nothing for doing nothing except being wise?

YANG

And stuff.

YIN

Yes, and stuff. Moving on. Next of kin?

LAO TZU

Why? What for?

YANG

Oh, you know, in case some corrupt border guards decide to throw you off a cliff and eat your Bubby, who do we call?

LAO TZU

Call?

YIN

Contact. Your people. Who are your people?

LAO TZU

I don't have any people. I'm kind of a solo deal. So, is that it? Am I free to go?

YIN

What's the rush, friend?

YANG

Yeah, you don't do anything, you don't get paid anything, you don't have any people. I guess you can be a Wise Man pretty much anywhere, right?

LAO TZU

Well, it's not quite that...

YIN

Uh oh! We have an asterisk!

YANG

Oh dear.

LAO TZU

An asterisk? What's that?

YIN

It's a small star-shaped chara...

LAO TZU

Yes, I know what it is, but what does it mean?

YIN

It means before we let you leave China, we have to ask if you have anything to declare.

LAO TZU

Declare? No, not really. Just me and my Bubby.

YANG

You got a receipt for your Bubby?

YIN

I was thinking more about your wisdom.

LAO TZU

My what?

YIN

Your wisdom. You're a wise man, right?

LAO TZU

Well, yeah, I mean, for the paperwork...

YANG

Oh yeah, that's right! If you're a wise man you gotta have some wisdom. Only makes sense.

LAO TZU

Uh okay, maybe. I mean, I guess I have some wisdom.

YIN

Great, let's have it.

YANG

Yeah, spit it out, Maestro.

LAO TZU

Spit what out?

YIN

The wisdom. You can't take it out of the country. You'll have to leave it with us.

LAO TZU

Are you having fun with me again?

YIN

No, we're not having fun with you.

YANG

Do we look like we're having fun with you?

LAO TZU

I don't know. When was the last time anyone came through here?

YANG

Yesterday.

YIN

Never.

YANG

Oh yeah, never.

YIN

We've been here for fourteen years and you're the first, but I'm afraid the rules are very clear on this point.

YANG

Yeah, you said it yourself, wisdom is like poetry.

LAO TZU

I don't think I said that.

YANG

If you were a poet, we'd have to make sure you left your poems behind.

YIN

So you don't deprive your homeland of the fruit of your labors during your time with us, but instead of poems, you have wisdom.

YANG

Yeah, so fork it over.

LAO TZU

Um, I don't... I mean, uh, I can't...

YIN

Can't?

YANG

Oh dear.

LAO TZU

Well, it doesn't really work that way. I don't have a pocketful of wisdom I can just pull out and hand over.

YIN

Oh, I'm sorry to hear that.

YANG

Yeah, I was looking forward to some good wisdom.

LAO TZU

Sorry to disappoint. Am I free to go now?

YIN

Sure, yes, absolutely. Back into China, though. I'm afraid we can't let you

leave with your wisdom.

YANG

And we'll have to impound your water buffalo pending some clarification on license, title, taxes, and insurance.

LAO TZU

So I can go back into China without my Bubby, but we can't leave the country?

YANG

Right.

YIN

Or you can stay here. We can set up a nice bed of straw for you.

YANG

And a nice bed of rice for Bubby.

LAO TZU

What? No, you can't eat my Bubby!

YANG

We're just laying out your options.

YIN

Yeah, it's just this darned career choice you made.

YANG

Our bosses are sticklers about asset leakage.

YIN

Including wisdom.

YANG

Especially wisdom, I should think.

YIN

It's considered a national treasure.
I'm sure you understand.

LAO TZU

Well, I mean, a might be able to jot
down a few lines...

YIN

Oh, could you?

YANG

That would be lovely.

YIN

We can't leave big blanks areas on the
form. Gets us in hot water with the
higher-ups.

YANG

Literally.

YIN

Testy bunch, the higher-ups. Given to
extremes in the old punishment
department.

YANG

Always trying to outdo each other. You
don't want to know.

YIN

But if you were to give us some wisdom
we could use to complete the form...

YANG

Well, that's really all we need.

YIN

Right, a complete form.

Yin turns the parchment over and

prepares to write.

Okay, please begin.

LAO TZU

Well, okay, I guess I don't have a choice. Let's see, okay. Ready? Okay, here we go.

clears throat

LAO TZU (CONT'D)

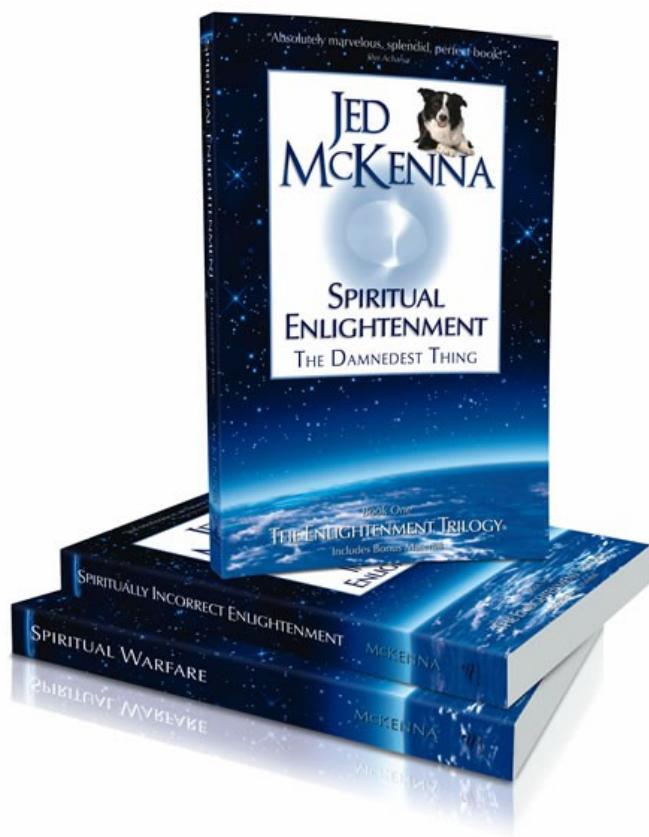
The Tao...

YIN

Stop!

YANG

The what?!



ACT II: DARKNESS WITHIN DARKNESS

YANG

What the hell is the Tao?

LAO TZU

Well, yeah, that's where we start running into some issues. You can't really say what it is. If you can say what it is, then that's definitely not what it is.

YIN

Oh dear, we're not getting off to a good start.

YANG

Is there gonna be a lot of talk about this Tao thing? If it's not a big deal maybe we can just skip past this part.

YIN

Yeah, good idea.

LAO TZU

No! The Tao is like the main thing.

Everything hinges on this. All things hang from the Tao like pearls from a thread.

YIN

*writes that down, reads it,
scratches it out*

So the Tao is like the main thing, but you can't say what it is?

LAO TZU

Right.

YANG

And if you do say what it is, you're wrong.

LAO TZU

Right.

YANG

The paper-pushers back at HQ are not gonna like this.

YIN

Yeah, they can be a little anal.

LAO TZU

The words of truth are always paradoxical.

YIN

I'll write that down, but it won't help.

YANG

What do we have so far, Yin?

YIN

Um, the uh, Tao is a thing where you can't say what it is, and if you do say

what it is, you're wrong. And it's like a necklace, I guess.

YANG

Okay, that's a start. We can work with that. And how do we go about seeing this Tao of yours?

LAO TZU

Er, you can't actually see it.

YANG

Why not?

LAO TZU

Well, because you're not a sage. You're just, you know, regular.

YIN

But you can see it?

LAO TZU

Oh yeah, sure. All the time.

YANG

Like right now?

LAO TZU

Uh, yep.

YANG

Where? Point.

LAO TZU

Well, I mean, it's everywhere, isn't it? It's everything. There's nothing that's not it.

YIN

So why can't we see it?

YANG

Yeah, we see all the same stuff you see.

LAO TZU

Right, sure, good question. Well, you see, you see the surface of things. You see the superficial world. You see heaven and earth and the ten thousand things, but the Tao is like the thing behind all that.

YANG

Let me stop you there, Maestro. If we want to see this Tao thing of yours, we can't.

LAO TZU

Right. Well, you can see what it's not, but not what it is.

YANG

Sounds like a load of buffalo dung. You can see what the Tao is, but we can only see what it's not?

LAO TZU

I know how that sounds, but yeah. You see the manifestation, I see the source. Sorry.

YIN

No, that's okay. It's fine. That's the wisdom part, I suppose. If it made sense we'd all be wise and you'd be out of a job, right?

LAO TZU

Yeah, I guess.

YIN

The problem is, strictly in terms of

the paperwork you see, I feel like we might be a little heavy on the paradox. The higher-ups aren't really known for their appreciation of irony and contradiction, even when it's in a wisdomy context. Perhaps you could take the sagely double-talk down a notch and say something that actually makes sense?

LAO TZU

Um, sure, okay. Benefit comes from what is there. Usefulness from what is not there. How's that?

YIN

Uh, not great.

YANG

I say we throw the old man off the cliff and eat the water buffalo. Who's gonna know?

YIN

I think what my associate is trying to say is, would you please elaborate on that point?

LAO TZU

Uh, sure. Take this teacup for example. The cup provides us with a benefit of containment, but its usefulness is not because of what is there but what's not there.

YANG

He's totally messing with us.

LAO TZU

Or like that wall. The wall is the benefit, but the window is the usefulness. See? The wall is there, but

the window is useful by being not there.

YANG

If we're attacked with flaming arrows
you won't think so.

LAO TZU

Or like your minds. They're like
teacups that are already full, so I
can't really pour fresh knowledge into
them, can I?

YIN

Blame-shifting is not a good way to go
here.

LAO TZU

The cup is useful for what's not there.
You can't drink tea from a lump of
clay, right? Benefit comes from
somethingness, but usefulness comes
from nothingness. Well, you know,
sometimes.

YANG

I'm picturing a fresh-dug grave.

LAO TZU

Exactly! It's useful because it's
empty. If you fill it with... Oh, yes, I
see.

YIN

Let's stick with the teacup for now,
shall we?

LAO TZU

Yes, okay. We're talking about the
potential state. An empty cup has
unlimited potential, a full cup has no
potential. Its usefulness is in its

emptiness. A cup, a window, a grave,
the hub of a wheel, it's their
emptiness that makes them useful, right?

YIN

Okay, so?

YANG

Yeah, so?

LAO TZU

Well, you know, it's a work in
progress. You can't just ask someone to
start saying a lot of wise stuff right
off the top of their head. It's a
process. Observational wisdom, like,
hey, you ever notice how a few minutes
after you eat Chinese food, you're
hungry again? Like, what's that all
about, right?

YANG

I have not noticed that. And you don't
have to say Chinese food, you can just
say food.

YIN

Yes, Chinese is assumed. Okay, let's
forget the teacup business. Try
something else.

LAO TZU

The Tao begat one, one begat two, two
begat three and three begat the ten
thousand things.

YANG

Okay, now we're gettin' somewhere.

LAO TZU

The ten thousand things carry the

positive and embrace the negative.

YIN

They do?

LAO TZU

Sure, the ten thousand things achieve harmony by combining positive and negative, see? You have to have both.

YIN

Okay. Please provide an example.

YANG

Yeah, like what?

LAO TZU

Well, like anything. Man-woman, high-low, inhale-exhale, light-dark, big-small. Everything has two sides, right? And even though they're not always equal, they're always in balance.

YIN

Er, maybe we could use an illustration, like a symbol or a pictogram or something.

LAO TZU

Okay, draw a picture of two fish swimming in a bowl, one white, one black, kind of chasing each other around in circles.

Yin draws the yinyang symbol.

YIN

Wow, what a great symbol! What do you call it?

LAO TZU

I call it the Lao Tzu symbol. It represents the dual nature of reality, you know, the harmony and balance of opposites.

YANG

The name could use some work.

YIN

And what does the bowl represent?

LAO TZU

The finite nature of reality.

YIN

Meaning?

LAO TZU

Well, everything finite has a beginning, a middle and an end, right? So heaven and earth and the ten thousand things are all finite, meaning they seem real but they're really not. The Tao, on the other hand, has no beginning, middle or end. It just goes on like, you know, forever.

YANG

And how do you know all this?

LAO TZU

Well, it stands to reason.

YANG

I'm not sure it does.

YIN

Okay, so there's the main thing, which is the Tao, and there's all the other stuff, which is like heaven and earth

and the ten thousand things and us,
right?

LAO TZU

Right, but only the Tao is real.
Everything else is just, you know...

YIN

No, I don't know.

LAO TZU

Well, like, not real, right? Like
impermanent, fleeting. The ten thousand
things represent all the little comings
and goings while the Tao itself is
like, you know, the always part.

YANG

We have a beginning, a middle and an
end, so that means we're not real? We
don't exist?

LAO TZU

Correct. We're fleeting, like a passing
thought or a brief spark in the eternal
night. First we're not, then we are,
then we're not again. Life is but a
dream, but the Tao abideth forever.

YANG

aside to Yin

Whaddaya think?

YIN

I don't know. It sounds okay coming out
of his mouth, but it looks totally
bonkers on a government form. We're
soldiers, we're not in the wisdom game.

YANG

Well, it sounds better than that Confucius guy. That guy gives me a headache.

YIN

Yeah, but that guy's not sitting in our shack, this guy is.

YANG

Well, let's keep going and see what happens. Worst case, we eat like kings tonight.

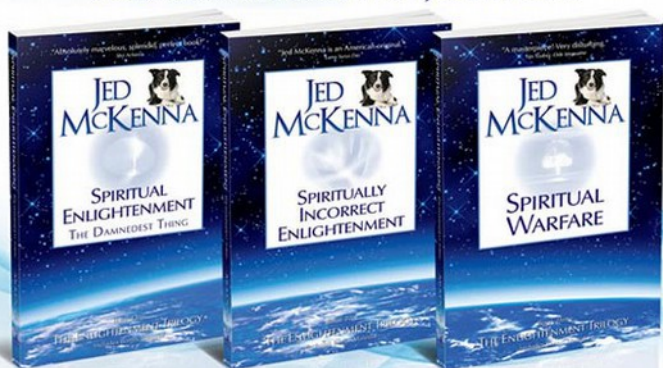
YIN

Emperors.

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ACT III: SOFT & YIELDING

YIN

Okay Maestro, we're on a roll, let's keep it going.

YANG

Yeah, this Tao thing sounds pretty great.

LAO TZU

Well, no, it's not that it's great. That's really where they get you. You can't really say it's great or not great, or this or not that, see what I mean? The infinite cannot be captured by the finite, right? The Tao is kind of like everything and the only thing, so anything you say about it is necessarily incorrect.

YANG

Or maybe everything you say about it is

super-correct.

YIN

Yeah, I like that better. Less negative.

YANG

I know, right? More accessible. We have to keep the common man in mind here.

YIN

Yeah, the Tao shouldn't be a downer.

YANG

Oh good one! Write that!

LAO TZU

No, don't write that. Look, as soon as you dilute the truth even just the teensiest little bit...

YIN

Yeah, we get it. Listen, I'm gonna write it down the way we said and we can come back to it later. We just want to get you out of here before winter sets in or you'll be here 'til spring. We'll wrap up with you and send you on your way, then we can tidy up the paperwork. Sound good?

LAO TZU

Well, I'm starting to feel like this might be my legacy, my gift to the world, and...

YANG

Whoa, pump the brakes there, buddy. One minute you're leaving the country, and now you're leaving gifts to the world?

LAO TZU

Well, you got me excited about our little project.

YIN

It's a form, not a project.

YANG

Yeah, Maestro, we're not your devoted pupils or your muse, we're just a couple of guys who made some bad life choices and now we're stuck in this shack playing Pinky Touch for months at a time.

YIN

Let's try to reign in our expectations, shall we?

The door bursts open and an old lady enters.

YANG

You got laundry?

OLD LADY

You got ticky?

YANG

No ticky.

OLD LADY

So solly. No ticky, no laundry.

YIN

Yeah, this never gets old.

OLD LADY

slaps Yin on back of head

Aw, you boys are no fun.

*She steps out and returns with a
basket of folded clothes. Sees
Lao Tzu.*

OLD LADY

Who's this guy?

YIN

Venerable Master.

OLD LADY

Is that your water buffalo parked
outside?

LAO TZU

That's my Bubby.

OLD LADY

Oh, I know you! I saw you once. You
were giving a talk in a tea house. You
said we should all be more like water.
We thought you were drunk.

LAO TZU

Could be. I went through a dark period...

OLD LADY

You told a story about a man whose
horse ran away and everyone was sad for
him, but he just said, "We'll see."

LAO TZU

I don't think that was me.

OLD LADY

Then his horse came back with a bunch
of other horses and everyone was happy
for the man, and he said, "We'll see."

LAO TZU

Yeah, I know the story.

OLD LADY

And then the man's son breaks his leg
on one of the new horses and everyone
is sad for the man...

YIN

And he just says "We'll see."

YANG

Does it just go on like this?

LAO TZU

It goes on forever.

OLD LADY

And then they come to make the son a
soldier for war, but his leg is broken
so they can't take him, and...

YANG

Everyone is happy for the man.

YIN

Yeah, I think we get it.

OLD LADY

Well, at the tea house, he went on for
like ten more things; happy, sad,
happy, sad, we'll see, we'll see, we'll
see.

YIN

And what's the point?

OLD LADY

Be like water, I guess.

YANG

to Lao Tzu

Is that the point? Be like water?

LAO TZU

I don't remember, I was going through some stuff...

OLD LADY

The man in the story is supposed to be wise because he doesn't have highs and lows, he's always level like water.

YANG

That sounds dumb. What's wrong with highs and lows?

YIN

Yeah, if my best horse ran away, I'd be like, really bummed.

YANG

And if it came back with a bunch of others, I'd be like, wahoo!

OLD LADY

That's what we thought at the tea house, like the man sounded pretty boring. No ups and downs, always just flat.

LAO TZU

Water always finds its own level, it follows the path of least resistance, it's humble, it dwells in the lowest places. It's like, you know, an allegory.

OLD LADY

You have any new material since then?

LAO TZU

I'm not a stand-up comic, I'm a sage, a wise man.

YANG

A venerable master.

LAO TZU

Exactly. Well, that's my name, but...

OLD LADY

So you're on tour? Cheering up the troops?

LAO TZU

Not really, I'm uh...

YANG

He's leaving China.

OLD LADY

Leaving China? What kind of bullshit is that? Where you going?

LAO TZU

Nowhere really, just off to live in nature.

OLD LADY

What, there's not enough nature here for you? This place is all nature, the whole country, nothing but nature, everywhere you look, nature, up the yinyang...

YIN & YANG

Hey!

OLD LADY

...and you gotta leave because some other place has better nature?

LAO TZU

I don't know, I'm just looking for a change of scenery.

OLD LADY

Is that what water does? Look for a change of scenery?

LAO TZU

I don't think you really get the whole water thing.

YIN

We're making him write down his wisdom before he goes.

YANG

In case it's any good.

OLD LADY

It doesn't sound very good. That guy with the horses sounds like a real jerk.

YANG

Yeah, someone should give that guy a good karate chop!

YIN

Kung fu.

YANG

Yeah, a good kung fu chop!

LAO TZU

Well, it's not really a real person.

YIN

What, you just made the whole story up?

YANG

Is that a wiseman thing? Making up stories?

LAO TZU

Yeah, kind of. It's an allegory, a parable.

YANG

He can't just say be like water, he has to make up a whole story.

OLD LADY

Okay, what else you got, Mr. Wisdom?

YIN

He said those who know don't talk and those who talk don't know.

OLD LADY

Know what?

YIN

He didn't say.

OLD LADY

Does that mean he knows or not?

YIN

Don't know.

YANG

Become master of the universe without striving, he said.

OLD LADY

to Lao Tzu

Are you master of the universe?

LAO TZU

It's not like it sounds.

OLD LADY

It sounds like master of the universe. Is that what you are?

LAO TZU

Yes and no.

OLD LADY

Does the universe do your bidding?

LAO TZU

Yes and no.

OLD LADY

More yes or more no?

LAO TZU

More no but some yes. I like to focus on the yes.

OLD LADY

Is it doing your bidding right now?
Getting you stuck in this dump?

LAO TZU

Well, what the universe wants and what I want are really the same thing, so I guess the answer is yes. If this is what the universe wants, I want it too, even if I don't understand it right now.

OLD LADY

That's a little convenient, don't you think?

LAO TZU

It is convenient, yes.

YANG

So if we throw him off a cliff, he'll just be like, okay, I'm at one with the universe because I like getting thrown off cliffs all the time.

OLD LADY

So then maybe I'm a wise man too since I'm in this shack doing the bidding of the universe, right?

LAO TZU

Technically, that would be correct. You are really just an isolated energetic pattern in a vast ocean of energy, so your experience is one of either alignment or misalignment with the currents of being. I live in alignment with the current and flow, so my experience of life is smooth and effortless. If your experience of life is not smooth and effortless, then that's a reflection of your misalignment with the primal energy and overarching intelligence, the Tao.

OLD LADY

to Yin

Holy shit! That was good! Did you write that down? I think there might be a book in this!

YIN

We just need to fill in the form.

OLD LADY

No, seriously, this guy talks real wise. We squeeze a bestseller out of him and, you know, we're all outta here. Champagne wishes and caviar dreams, right?

YIN

Are you sure he's wise? I thought he was just pulling our yangs.

YANG

Hey!

OLD LADY

Old man, say something wise.

LAO TZU

I do nothing, yet nothing goes undone.

OLD LADY

Bingo! That's exactly the kind of crap we're looking for.

LAO TZU

It's not crap, it's real wisdom. It's a real way to live and if people understand that they can lead lives of greater ease and comfort.

OLD LADY

Yeah, no shit. If people buy our book, I can live a life of greater ease and comfort. I don't know if you've ever had to wash clothes in a frigid river or perform sex acts on a couple of Mongoloids...

YANG

aside to Yin

Did she just insult us?

YIN

aside to Yang

Surprisingly, no.

OLD LADY

...but I can tell you, it leaves a lot to be desired. Is this wisdom of yours some big whoop? Great, but so is having a bestseller and getting rich and giving these poor old knees a rest. You

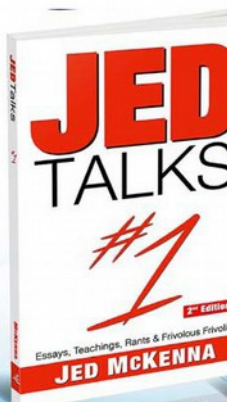
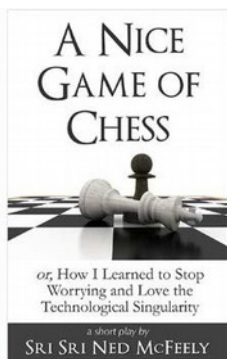
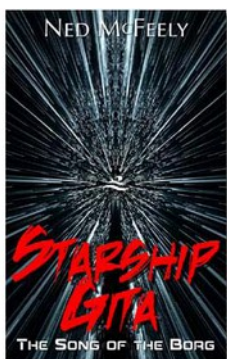
wanna say some clever stuff like you don't do anything and everything still gets done, that's good for both of us. You sound wise and we get rich. That, or we eat your buffalo and throw you off a cliff. Your choice.

LAO TZU

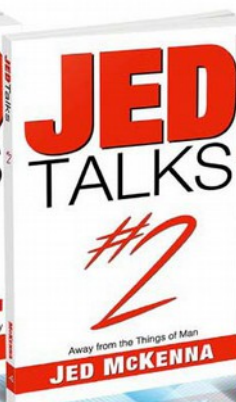
Do I still get to have my name on the book?

OLD LADY

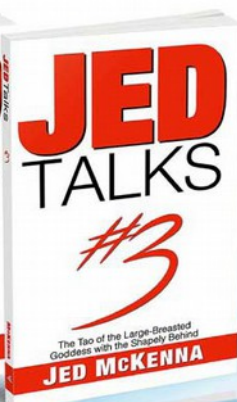
If it's between Venerable Master or Elderly Prostitute, which do you think is gonna zoom up the charts?



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ACT IV: YIELD AND OVERCOME

Four days later...

OLD LADY

Okay, where are we?

YIN

We just have a lot of crazy bits and pieces.

OLD LADY

Show me.

LAO TZU

I'm not that happy with it in its current wording.

YANG

You wanna spend the rest of your life in this shack?

LAO TZU

Not really.

YANG

Then get happy.

OLD LADY

reads aloud

Ruling the country is like cooking a small fish?

YIN

That's what he said.

LAO TZU

Look, I'm getting really tired.

OLD LADY

You can sleep when you're dead. Right now, write. Why is ruling a country like cooking a small fish? Christ, it sounds like open mic night at a student union. Well?

LAO TZU

I don't know, it just is.

YIN

Look at the rest.

OLD LADY

reads aloud

Use the Tao and evil won't have power to do harm... The sage will be safe... Where are we going with this?

YANG

And what happened to the little fish?

OLD LADY

Yeah, what happened to the little fish? What does a little fish have to do with

ruling a country?

LAO TZU

I don't know about the fish, I just said I could go for a little fish and I guess he wrote it down.

YIN

I'm just writing down everything he says. I can't tell the difference between genius and bullshit.

OLD LADY

That's the point, no one can.

YANG

He said some stuff about knowing and not knowing. He can't make up his mind. Knowing is bad, not knowing is good, not knowing you don't know is bad, something like that.

OLD LADY

to Lao Tzu

Why you gotta talk so much shit? Just say the good stuff and you can get outta here.

LAO TZU

I said it's good to know what you don't know and bad to think you know what you don't know

YANG

See? He said it again!

OLD LADY

How can we know what we don't know? You have to make sense. You can't just do jazzy stream-of-consciousness stuff.

You're writing for soldiers and rice farmers, let's try to keep it simple.

YIN

Listen to this part. When the whole divides into parts the parts need names. There are already too many names.

OLD LADY

Oh c'mon, dude! Whaddaya ya mean there are too many names? Everything's gotta have a name! You want us to have to go around describing everything all the time because we have too many names?

LAO TZU

I just thought it sounded nice, like, let's not go around giving everything a name all the time. Just let things be what they are. Why be so uptight about labels?

YIN

Because we communicate in symbols, maybe?

YANG

So we can understand each other, maybe?

LAO TZU

Look, there are like twenty different kinds of pelican, right? Do they all need their own name? An Alsatian Pelican and a Graybeard Pelican and a Speckled Baby-Delivery Pelican... I mean, it's just a freakin' pelican. Lighten up!

OLD LADY

You got a thing against pelicans now?

YANG

So instead of pass the salt, your way I gotta say pass the dried chipmunk skull with the white crystalline substance please?

YIN

The salt can still be what it is, right? Just because we're calling it something doesn't mean it's not salt anymore.

LAO TZU

But it was never really salt in the first place. Salt is just a word, a sound. It's the symbol of a thing, not the thing itself. Let's not mistake symbol for substance, right?

YANG

Wow, wisdom is hard!

LAO TZU

I'm trying to say, uh, don't let the name be the thing, don't let the symbol replace the thingness of the thing. It's not really salt, right? Salt by any other name still tastes just as, uh, salty. I'm just saying we should see things for what they are and not settle for mere labels.

YANG

Why not?

LAO TZU

Because a name is like a finger pointing at the moon, okay? If you focus on the finger, you forget about the moon.

YIN

Oh, that was pretty good. Can I put that in?

OLD LADY

The moon thing? No, but leave the thing about too many names. You can't just give away all the best stuff, you have to make people work for it. How many chapters so far?

YANG

Eighty-one.

OLD LADY

No good. We need a hundred and eight. Very auspicious number.

LAO TZU

I can only do eighty-one. That's an auspicious number too.

OLD LADY

What's so great about eighty-one?

LAO TZU

It's a magic number. Three times three is nine, nine times nine is eighty-one.

OLD LADY

So what? That makes it magic?

LAO TZU

Or, three times three is nine, times three is twenty-seven, times three is eighty-one. Eighty-one is the square of nine and the fourth power of three.

OLD LADY

And that makes it magic?

LAO TZU

Eighty-one is the only number, out of all numbers, in which the digits add up to its own square root. C'mon, that has to count for something.

OLD LADY

Not really.

LAO TZU

Fine, it's not a magic number, it's just all I can come up with. I tried to get to a hundred and eight but the tank is dry. Seriously, I could cut all this down to half a page.

OLD LADY

Oh hell no! We need more, not less.

LAO TZU

Less is more.

OLD LADY

Don't start that crap, we need a book, not a pamphlet. We'll need a preface and a foreword, a bibliography, an epilogue, an index and maybe a concordance to make this thing a book people will pay for. We'll double-space the whole thing with wide margins and fatten it up with some pretty illustrations; birds and trees and shit.

YIN

Oh, hey! We got one! An illustration! Two fish in a bowl chasing each other in circles!

OLD LADY

Oh yeah? Make it three fish, that's even better.

LAO TZU

Wait! What? No! It has to be two fish!

YANG

He's got a real thing about fish.

OLD LADY

Maybe four fish. Four is a very auspicious number.

LAO TZU

No it's not! Four is a stupid number! It doesn't make any sense!

YANG

I think he just says whatever sounds backward and we're supposed to think it's wise.

YIN

reading aloud

If one is sick of sickness, then one is not sick. The perfect square has no corners. A good door needs no lock. Do not tinkle like jade. When the Tao is absent, horses are bred outside the city. One gains by losing and loses by gaining. Knowing others is wisdom, knowing the self is enlightenment.

YANG

Wow! That's really deep!

OLD LADY

Ka-ching!

LAO TZU

He wrote it all down wrong. That's not what I said.

OLD LADY

Who cares what you said? It's not all about you. This is the kind of wisdomy shit we're looking for.

LAO TZU

But knowing the self isn't enlightenment because there is no self. It's an illusion!

OLD LADY

Listen Maestro, you gotta get with the program here. You gotta give the people what they want, not what you want. You start telling people they don't even exist, how're they gonna like that?

LAO TZU

Uh, not much?

OLD LADY

Not much is right! You tell them knowing others is wisdom and knowing themself is enlightenment, they're gonna like that. That's something they can work with. Gives them hope. Got it?

LAO TZU

Yeah, sure, but it's not true.

YANG

You ever wanna get out of here?

LAO TZU

Desperately.

YANG

Then it's true enough.

YIN

True enough, that's good, that's a good

thing to aim for.

LAO TZU

But this is my legacy we're talking about! My gift to the world.

OLD LADY

The world's gonna love it. A guy named Venerable Master telling them knowing others is wisdom and knowing themselves is enlightenment? Are you kidding me? This stuff is pure gold. We got a bestseller on our hands. Pagodas by the sea for everyone!

LAO TZU

I don't want a pagoda by the sea, I want to go off into the mountains and contemplate, you know, stuff.

YIN

So who's stopping you?

LAO TZU

You are! You're holding me prisoner! You're torturing me! All you had to do was see an old man on a water buffalo and wave him through, but you're so bored out here in the middle of nowhere that you decided to treat me like a fly and pull my wings off and make me buzz around in circles!

OLD LADY

Good energy. Let's tap into that.

to Yin

Can we use any of that?

YIN

I don't know. The sage is like a fly

with no wings? He goes nowhere and
buzzes around in circles?

YANG

That sounds pretty good.

LAO TZU

It sounds pretty stupid!

OLD LADY

Put a pin in it. Maybe we can spruce it
up a bit. Make it a dragonfly or
something.



[Jedvaita: The Way the World Unfolds](#)

ACT V: THE ETERNAL TAO

YIN

I'm not sure this guy really is a wise man. I think maybe he just said that to complete the form. He's probably a spy or a secret agent or something.

YANG

to Lao Tzu

How 'bout it? Are you really a wise man?

LAO TZU

Well, there are no specific guidelines, but pretty much, yeah.

YANG

Quick, say something wise!

LAO TZU

Returning is the motion of the Tao.

OLD LADY

Oh, snap! I just got chills. I'm already thinking sequel: *Tao Te Dieux*:

The Force Awakens.

YIN

Is that true? The returning motion thing?

YANG

Who cares if it's true, it sounds true.

OLD LADY

Yeah, write that down the way he said it. Don't let him change it later.

YANG

What does it mean?

OLD LADY

Who cares what it means? It means whatever people think it means. We just have to worry about how it sounds and that sounds freakin' awesome!

YIN

to Lao Tzu

You keep sayin' stuff like that and we'll have you outta here in no time.

LAO TZU

Yeah? Like four days ago?

YANG

Don't be cranky, you're doing good work. You're helping the people of China and the world. You'll be remembered forever.

LAO TZU

For what? Selling out? Repackaging truth for public consumption? Turning wisdom into a cheap commodity?

Poisoning the minds of the people with sugar when they crave sustenance?

YANG

Uh, yeah, I guess.

YIN

You should be happy. What are the odds that a couple of nice border guards and an old laundry lady would stop you and turn your garbled ramblings into a sacred text?

YANG

Yeah, don't be all high and mighty. If we had just waved you through no one would have ever heard of you. Now you'll be famous forever!

OLD LADY

You did good with that returning motion thing. Say more stuff like that.

LAO TZU

Okay, here you go. Why are the people starving? Because the rulers eat up the money in taxes. Why are the people rebellious? Because the rulers interfere too much. Why do the people think so little of death? Because the rulers demand too much of life.

OLD LADY

Oy vey!

YANG

Make him stop!

YIN

Jesus Christ! I can't write that down!

LAO TZU

Why not? It's true enough. Isn't that
what you're looking for, true enough?

YIN

You think you can say crazy shit
because you're leaving the country, but
they'll have our heads if I write that.

OLD LADY

Try to be a little more upbeat. Happy
wisdom, not crazy wisdom.

LAO TZU

The humble is the root of the noble.
The low is the foundation of the high.

OLD LADY

Yeah, that's better. Is it true?

LAO TZU

I don't know. It was in a fortune
cookie I got in a Chinese restaurant
once.

YIN

You don't have to say Chinese.

YANG

Yeah, it's assumed.

OLD LADY

Holy shit! Is that what's going on here?

*she rifles through parchments,
stopping to read from different
parts*

Let's see here, yep, yep. Gibberish,
gibberish, fortune cookie. Gibberish,
gibberish, fortune cookie. It's all
gibberish and fortune cookies! This

guy's just been stringing us along this whole time.

YANG

Let's beat his ass!

OLD LADY

No, wait! Fortune cookie and gibberish might be a recipe for a bestseller, right? He's obviously holding back the good stuff so he can write his own book later. We just squeeze the best stuff out of him, make it all kind of blurry and vague, add a lot of cheap filler to thicken it up, and we'll have our book! It's a lot easier to sound wise than to be wise!

LAO TZU

Those who know when they have enough are rich. There is no greater misfortune than greed. Full of desire you see the manifestation, free from desire you see the mystery.

OLD LADY

There! See? Fortune cookie wisdom!

YIN

Yeah, but how many ways can you say the same few things? How much can we really stretch it out?

YANG

Good point. Without the gibberish we only have a few pages. The more gibberish the better! Hey Maestro, say some more gibberish.

LAO TZU

The sage is guided by what he feels and

not by what he sees. He lets go of that and chooses this.

OLD LADY

Write it!

YIN

Got it!

LAO TZU

C'mon people, this is exactly what I'm talking about, this difference between the authentic and the artificial. The way you guys are going, you'll give rise to generations of Taoists who act sagely instead of becoming sages. You're going to send people looking in the wrong direction.

*Yin, Yang and Old Lady huddle
for a quiet discussion before
resuming their positions.*

YIN

to Lao Tzu

Okay, you can go.

LAO TZU

Go? Go where? What? Why?

YANG

Leave. Get your Bubby out of the impound lot and go. That's what you want, right? Leave China? So fine, leave! You go now. So long. Bye-bye!

OLD LADY

We don't need you, Maestro. We can make a better book without you. All your

truth is just messing things up. People don't want that shit. You would sell like ten books, friends and family, local library, that's it! Who cares? We fix it up and sell like a gazillion books! People will buy our book for a thousand years.

LAO TZU

But it's just garbage! You're betraying your audience!

OLD LADY

At least we'll have an audience! Your way, no audience. Catch twenty-two. Be honest and unpopular or dishonest and popular. At least our way, maybe a little truth gets out to the people. Your way, it ends here and you die unknown.

YIN

No one's telling you not to be honest, we just don't want you messing up our book.

YANG

We got the recipe now; four parts gibberish to one part fortune cookie. We don't need your help.

LAO TZU

Help? It's *my* book! I am the Venerable Master! What are you? A coupla border guards and a cleaning lady. Who are you people to write *The Tao Te Ching*?

OLD LADY

Bad title. We need something with more pizzazz.

YIN

The Wonderful Way of the Way?

YANG

Truth, Justice and the Chinese Way?

OLD LADY

No, we need sex appeal. *The Tao of the Large-Breasted Goddess with the Shapely Behind*, something like that.

YANG

Wow! I'd buy that book and I don't even know how to read!

YIN

You have to give the people what they want.

LAO TZU

No, you have to give them the truth, even if they don't want it.

OLD LADY

Seriously, do you ever listen to yourself?

LAO TZU

Okay, that's it! I'm not going anywhere. I can't stop you from ruining this project with your complete lack of insight and your corruption and your greed, but I can at least try to get a few good points in. I'll help you write your dumb book, but you have to let me have some say in it, okay?

OLD LADY

Yeah, yeah. Okay Maestro. Look, maybe you got some wisdom, I don't know. I'm a simple person. I wake up, I do a

bunch of stuff, I go to sleep, nothing fancy. Maybe you're fancy with a lot of wisdom and stuff, nice for you. To me, you look pretty regular, like you wake up, do a bunch of stuff and go to sleep. Where's the wisdom part? I don't know. You say you're wise, fine, you're wise. What do I know?

LAO TZU

The sage knows without traveling. He sees without looking. He accomplishes much without doing anything.

OLD LADY

Yeah, sure. Nice work if you can get it. You say some good stuff, but is it true? I don't know. How do I apply it in my own life? I don't. I'm just an old lady. Maybe if I was young again I'd be excited and do a lot of Tao stuff and become a wise old lady riding around on water buffaloes and saying clever shit all day, but I'm just a simple person.

LAO TZU

See simplicity in the complicated. Achieve greatness in little things.

OLD LADY

Write it.

YIN

Got it.

OLD LADY

That's what I mean. I'm in the rice paddy for ten hours a day, I do laundry, raise kids, care for the elderly, cook, clean, and try to

maintain order, and now you come along and say achieve greatness in little things, and I ask myself, is this guy some great prophet lighting the way to heaven, or just some goofball riding a water buffalo talking like a fortune cookie?

LAO TZU

The truth probably lies somewhere in-between.

OLD LADY

Speaking of which, I just heard from my cousin Jimmy over in India. They got a guy now - the Boobie, the Booty, something like that - they say he talks about a middle way...

There's a knock at the door.

YANG

Jesus, seriously? Fourteen years and not a soul, now it's standing room only.

YIN

Who's there?

LAO TZU

It's her. Open the door. Don't make her wait.

OLD LADY

Her who?

LAO TZU

The one you just summoned. The Large-Breasted Goddess with the Shapely Behind.

OLD LADY

I just made that shit up!

LAO TZU

Maybe you did. We don't know how things work when gods are involved.

*Yang opens the door revealing
Bubby.*

YANG

There's no one here but the old man's water buffalo.

LAO TZU

Bubby!

BUBBY

May I come in?

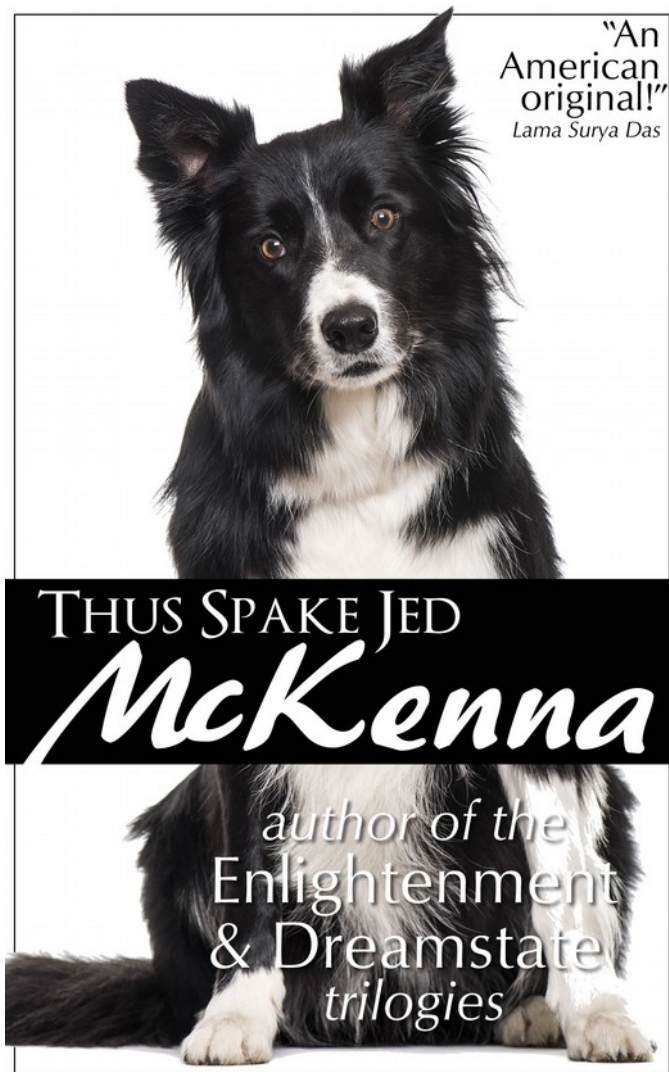
YANG

Holy shit! The fuckin' thing talks!

BUBBY

Is that a yes? Let's call that a yes.

Bubby enters.



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ACT VI: THE MOTHER OF ALL THINGS

*Upon crossing the threshold,
Bubby transforms into a tall,
radiant GODDESS in flowing silk
robes. Yin, Yang and Old Lady
fall trembling to their knees,
heads pressed against the
ground. Lao Tzu remains seated.*

LAO TZU

Always with the big entrance.

YIN

We kneel before thee, mighty goddess!

YANG

We prostrate ourselves before your
great magic!

OLD LADY

And terrifying beauty!

YANG

Yeah, and terrifying beauty!

GODDESS

Would you prefer my other face?

OLD LADY

I think we've seen it.

GODDESS

I have many faces. Arise. Stand and regard me.

*Yin, Yang and Old Lady stand and
keep their heads bowed.*

GODDESS

to Lao Tzu

So, introduce me to your friends.

LAO TZU

Everybody, Goddess. Goddess, everybody.

GODDESS

Hi guys. Anything to eat around here?

LAO TZU

They were gonna eat you.

GODDESS

I'm something of an acquired taste.

LAO TZU

And a little hard to swallow.

GODDESS

Really people, nothing? A sandwich, a bag of chips?

to Lao Tzu

Why aren't you playing your part?

LAO TZU

You're the one who barged in here and broke character.

GODDESS

Lighten up, they had me tied to the pissing rock for four days. So what's the deal in here?

LAO TZU

Just banging out a bestseller.

OLD LADY

The Tao of the Large-Breasted Goddess with the Shapely Behind!

GODDESS

The Book of the Way will do fine. Have a seat, honey.

LAO TZU

I thought you weren't supposed to interfere.

GODDESS

I don't command, I suggest. At ease, boys. Just continue as if I wasn't here.

LAO TZU

Yeah guys, just continue as if a talking water buffalo didn't just walk into your shack and turn into a large-breasted goddess with a shapely behind who is now looking for some chips and asking about the book you're writing so you can live in pagodas by the sea. Nothing to see here.

GODDESS

Okay, so where are we? You've been writing? What have you got?

OLD LADY

Fortune cookie wisdom and gibberish.

GODDESS

A surefire recipe for success. We don't want to give away the good stuff.

YIN

clutching parchments

This isn't the good stuff?

GODDESS

I don't know what you have there, dear. I'm just a beast of burden. Tell me what you've written.

YIN

reads

If you want to weaken something, you must let it grow strong. If you want to eliminate something, you must let it flourish. This is called subtle illumination. Who knows how it will all end? Is there no right and wrong? The sage is upright without causing harm, honest without hurting, illuminated but not flashy.

GODDESS

to Lao Tzu

Illuminated but not flashy?

LAO TZU

It's been a long four days.

YIN

reads

Without the body, what distress could there be? Only if you love your body as much as the world can you be entrusted with the world. Know the manly but cling to the womanly. Great-minded people abide in the kernel, not the husk.

GODDESS

to Lao Tzu

Really? This is what you've been doing while I was out there freezing my nosering off?

LAO TZU

You said...

GODDESS

I know what I said, mystical mumbo-jumbo, not amateur night at a comedy club.

OLD LADY

That's what I said! Fortune cookie wisdom and gibberish!

GODDESS

You've got the right idea, young lady. Why don't you try one?

OLD LADY

Me!? Oh, I couldn't.

GODDESS

Why not? You can't do any worse than Mr. Venerable over there. You've had

four days to think about it. Just make an observation from your own life. You have kids, right? Speak from the heart.

OLD LADY

Uh, okay. The Tao is the mother of all things. Knowing the children is knowing the mother. Knowing both mother and children brings an end to fear. Nuts, that was terrible!

GODDESS

That was great! A star is born! Try another.

OLD LADY

I can't think of anything. What should I say?

GODDESS

Doesn't matter. Talk about your life. How do you get home from here?

OLD LADY

If I have any sense I keep to the main road, my only fear is straying from it. Keeping to the main road is easy, but people like to get sidetracked. That was no good.

GODDESS

That was perfect. Pure gold. See? That's all there is to it. Mr. Yin, your turn. How do you feel about being stuck in this remote shack? Do you miss the world? From the heart, please.

YIN

Without looking through the window, you can see the way of things. Without going outside, you can know the whole

world. The farther you go, the less you know.

GODDESS

Wonderful! Mr. Yang, your turn. Just let it out.

YANG

The cries of roosters and dogs can be heard by one another. Hold on to the fruit and not the flower. Those who praise victory relish manslaughter.

GODDESS

Splendid! The clever person hears of the Tao and practices it diligently. The average person hears of the Tao and gives it thought now and again, and the dull person hears of the Tao and laughs aloud. Hence it is said... Mr. Yin? Let 'er rip.

YIN

Opening the vent and completing the enterprise will make one helpless. Though there be boats and carriages, there is no occasion to ride in them. The more skills men possess, the more strange contrivances appear. There are various kinds of instruments, but let them not be used.

GODDESS

Well done! Mr. Yang?

YANG

Being the valley of the world, eternal virtue will be full in you and you return to the state of uncarved wood. Let people return to making knots on ropes instead of writing. When the Tao

rules the world, proud stallions pull
dung carts.

GODDESS

I like where this is going. Young lady?

OLD LADY

Seal the openings, shut the doors, dull
the sharpness, untie the knots, dim the
light, and become one with the dust. To
bear the country's disgrace is to rule
the shrines of soil and grain. Those
who are obedient to the law will roll
up their sleeves and make the
disobedient obey. The best way to carve
is not to split.

GODDESS

And you, Mr. Venerable?

LAO TZU

I am a fool. I am confused. Others are
clear and bright, but I am dim and
weak. Others are sharp and clever, but
I am dull and stupid.

YANG

Wow, wisdom is fun!

GODDESS

Sure it is! Anyone can do it. Deep
inside you already know this stuff. You
don't need a venerable master or a
goddess or a book.

OLD LADY

We need a book to make us rich.

GODDESS

You're already rich, you just don't
know it. Seek not without for treasures

that lie within.

OLD LADY

Yeah, but seriously, I want to be rich. No more fortune cookie gibberish, we want the good stuff.

GODDESS

You already have it. Three precious gifts to be prized above all are compassion, moderation and humility.

OLD LADY

Bullshit! I'm up to my ass in compassion, moderation and humility and what good is it? I don't want to find greatness in little things, I want to find greatness in a pagoda by the sea full of jewels and servants and some proper utensils instead of these goddamn chopsticks!

GODDESS

The Tao that can be told speaks of flow and obstruction, but the Tao that can't be told speaks of whence thou came and whither thou goest, of who and what and where you really are. Is this the Tao you wish to hear?

OLD LADY

If it's the one that makes us rich and happy.

GODDESS

Very well, I shall tell you the secret Tao. You asked for it. Prepare to have your socks knocked off. Ready?

OLD LADY

Hell yeah! Yin, write this down.

Finally, we're getting to the good stuff. No more of this bullshit about water!

GODDESS

Let us speak of water!

OLD LADY

Goddammit!

GODDESS

All Water is One Water. All Essence is One Essence. In the Essence of Water find the Secret of the Tao. In the Secret of the Tao find the Truth of Man.

OLD LADY

Are you sure this is the good stuff?

GODDESS

Water falls from Heaven as rain and returns to Heaven as Essence. The one becomes the many, the many become the one. The story of Man is the many. The truth of Man is the One.

OLD LADY

I'm not really feeling it.

LAO TZU

You're losing them. They like the non-doing stuff better.

GODDESS

That which water touches, water becomes. Tea, piss, brine, honey, sap. The drop of rain becomes the sweat of the worker, the blood of the soldier, the tears of the mother. Thus it is said; Man descends from Heaven and ascends to Essence. Thus turns the

wheel of creation. Thus moves the motionless Tao. Thus is revealed the story of You.

YIN

Oh gosh, is it Tuesday already? I just remembered, I have this thing...

OLD LADY

Keep writing, maybe it gets better.

GODDESS

No two drops are the same. None falls twice, none turn back. None are lost, none go astray, none are forgotten. None has come before. None will come again.

YIN

Not getting better.

OLD LADY

Yeah, I'm not getting a bestseller vibe.

YANG

And what about the little fish?

GODDESS

In this moment thou art man or woman, mother, soldier, worker, slave. Behind these many masks resides the eternal, essential, impersonal One. When your earthly sojourn is over, and your human form falls away, return thee to the Essence whence you sprang.

OLD LADY

Can we spice this up a bit? Stick in a chase scene or some sex or something? Rain falls, becomes a lot of stuff and evaporates. I mean, big whoop!

GODDESS

When the drop falls into the stream,
can you show me the original drop? When
the stream becomes the river, can you
show me the original stream? When the
river returns to the sea, can you show
me the original river? When the eternal
has welcomed you home, can you show me
your temporal face?

YIN

Temporal face? I'm not writing that.

GODDESS

In the dream of many lies the truth of
one. In the secret of the drop lies the
truth of the sea. In the heart of man
shines the light of Essence.

YANG

Wow, wisdom is boring!

GODDESS

Soldier and sage, laundress and
goddess. In form, diverse, in Essence,
one. This is known by those who know,
is felt by those who feel, is seen by
those who see. The Truth of the False.
The reality of the dream. The One
behind the Many. The Tao behind the Tao.

YIN

Jesus, I think my ears are starting to
bleed.

GODDESS

Of the One we are born, and to the One
return. The Tao of ten-thousand things
can be spoken. The Tao of Essence
cannot be spoken.

YIN

That doesn't seem to be stopping you.

OLD LADY

Seriously, I was supposed to pick up the kids at the rice paddy like three days ago...

GODDESS

The Tao contains time, enfolds space, embraces mind. It flows from nothing, yet all things flow from it. Raindrop and ocean are, in essence, One. Mighty and meek are, in essence, One. Creator and destroyer are, in essence, One. Master and slave are...

OLD LADY

Yeah, yeah, master and slave are, in essence, one. Got it. Okay everybody, let's have a big guardshack round of applause for...

GODDESS

Thus may you understand your Earthly sojourn. One is all and all is One. The ten-thousand things pass in time. Truth is Unity. Essence alone abides. Thus is the Tao behind the Tao revealed...

YANG

Is there much more? I was thinking of sweeping up.

GODDESS

Oh, c'mon, people! Am I just talking to myself? Are you even listening to this? This is the good stuff!

LAO TZU

I think you lost them back at "Let us

speak of water."

GODDESS

This is what you're asking for! The key to everything, the story of you! Who and what and where you really are! I even set it to verse for chrissakes!

LAO TZU

You shoulda warmed them up with a few jokes. They like knock-knocks.

GODDESS

I offer you truth and you reject it! Oh well, you can't say I didn't try. Pearls before swine. So you tell me, what would you like to hear?

OLD LADY

Please show us the way! The happy way with champagne and caviar and pagodas by the sea.

YIN

Yes! What must we do in order to become at one with the happy Tao?

YANG

Yeah, not the raindrop Tao with the blood and piss and all that.

GODDESS

Very well, have the way your own way. What exactly did you have in mind?

OLD LADY

Mind! Aha! Now we're getting to the good stuff. Yin, keep writing. Gorgeous Goddess, are you saying we should be more mindful?

GODDESS

Uh, yeah, sure. Be more mindful,
whatever that means. Why not?

YIN

Should we sit for long periods with our
eyes closed and our minds empty while
silently repeating a meaningless sound?

GODDESS

Yeah, good. Turn off your mind to
become more mindful. That makes perfect
sense.

YANG

Should we stand naked on one leg and
smear ourselves in ash and smoke a lot
of weed?

GODDESS

Sounds like a party.

OLD LADY

Should we sit in uncomfortable
positions for long hours and ponder
imponderables while a sadistic asshole
hits us with a stick?

GODDESS

Whatever floats your boat.

YIN

Should we spend our time and energy
grooming our reflection in the eyes of
others to avoid turning our attention
inward?

GODDESS

Is that a real thing? Fine, yeah. Do
that.

YANG

Shall we renounce the real for the unreal? Embrace the synthetic over the authentic? Accept symbolic rites, hollow ceremonies and false sacraments as real, while forgetting the truth they represent?

GODDESS

Sure, sounds like a plan.

YIN

Shall we place a mask over our original face? Play two-dimensional characters and immerse ourselves in petty drama? Strut and fret our hour upon the stage like cackling hens while turning a blind eye to our boundless creative potential?

GODDESS

I see you've given this some thought.

OLD LADY

Shall we just go about our lives as if everything made perfect sense when we don't have the first asshair of a clue what's going on around here? Shall we just lie and pretend and play make-believe like children afraid of the dark? Shall we construct fortifications of lies and fear and crawl inside...

GODDESS

Okay, listen, I'm gonna stop you there. You guys seem to have a pretty good handle on this so I'll let you just hang out and brainstorm. No bad ideas, right? Me and the old man are just gonna ease on down the road, maybe hang

a left and check out this Booty guy,
see if he needs help polishing his
message. That middle-of-the-road thing
shows real promise.

*Lao Tzu and Goddess stand and
make their goodbyes. Upon
crossing the threshold, Goddess
transforms back into Bubby. Old
lady and the guards step outside
to watch them go.*

YIN

It goes without saying that none of
this ever happened.

YANG

What never happened?

YIN

Maybe we can still write the book and
be rich and happy.

OLD LADY

It's already written. *The Tao Te Ching*.
The goddess said it was just fine the
way it is. We shouldn't change a thing.

*Lao Tzu and Bubby stroll off
into the sunset.*

LAO TZU

I'm uncertain what just happened.

BUBBY

Uncertainty is what just happened. I've
sent a message open to clear
misinterpretation to weave a safe spell
of confusion that will span the
generations and assure that no one ever

figures out who and what and where they really are.

LAO TZU

But you tried to be honest with them.

BUBBY

I always play fair, but they are impervious. In them, truth has no place to enter.

LAO TZU

But what about integrity and honesty? What about decency and righteousness? What about the divine spark in the individual?

BUBBY

Try to see the small picture here. Nothing is what it seems. It's right to be wrong and good to be evil. Sickness is healthy, suffering brings pleasure. Destruction is a creative act, death is the meaning of life. Awareness abhors a vacuum. The entire spectrum of appearance must be populated. It's not about the players, it's about the play.

LAO TZU

But then, how can anyone ever awaken to their divine potential?

BUBBY

That's just another drama, no one's stopping you. But if you wake everyone up, they'll revert to their natural state and nothing is duller than nature. Believe me, I'm doing us all a favor. It's better for everyone this way. I'm not a liberator or a jailer, I'm simply a producer of dramatic

spectacle. The play's the thing, and
the show must go on.

LAO TZU

I wish I'd brought a tennis ball.

BUBBY

I'm a goddess, not a border collie.

LAO TZU

You're only a goddess in a writer's
imagination.

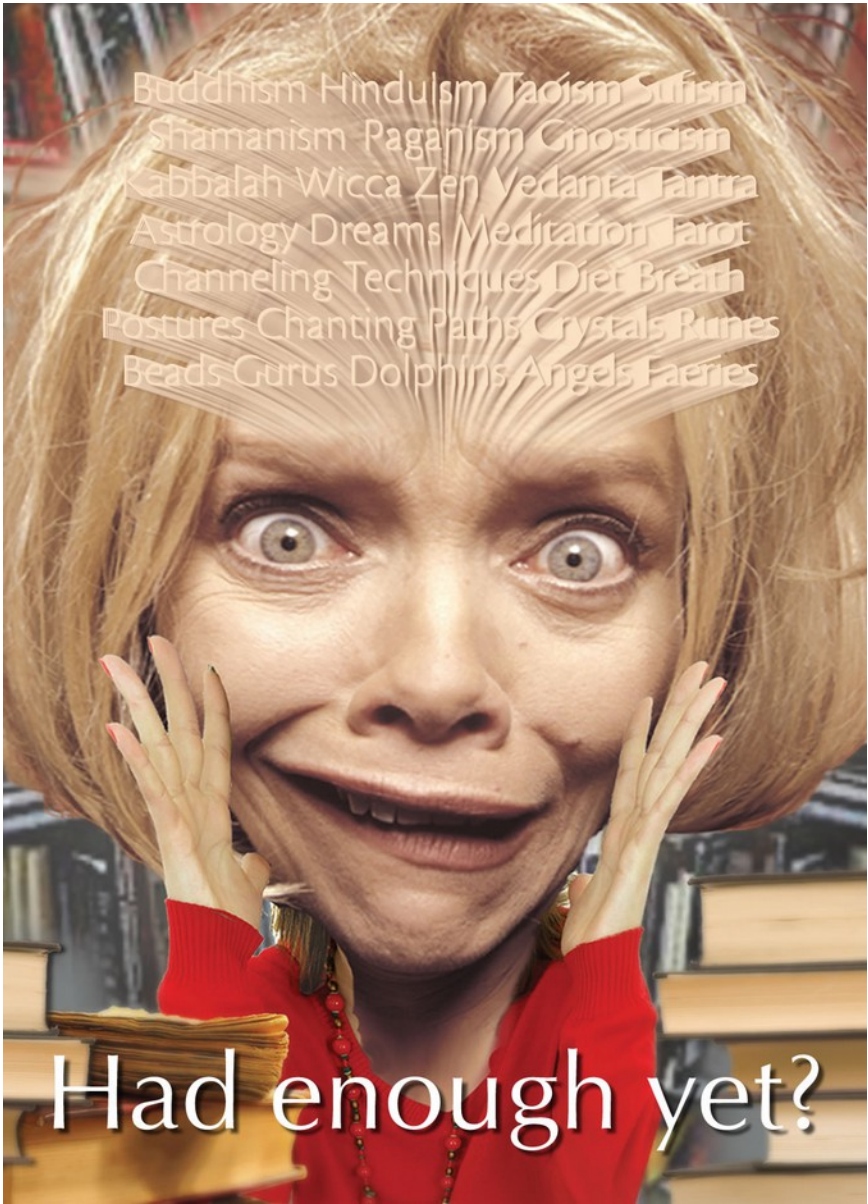
BUBBY

You're only a writer in mine.

*Yin, Yang and Old Lady watch as
Lao Tzu and Bubby disappear into
the setting sun. Returning to
the shack, they find that the
Goddess has left a huge mountain
of shit - not entirely
metaphorical - blocking the way.*

THE END

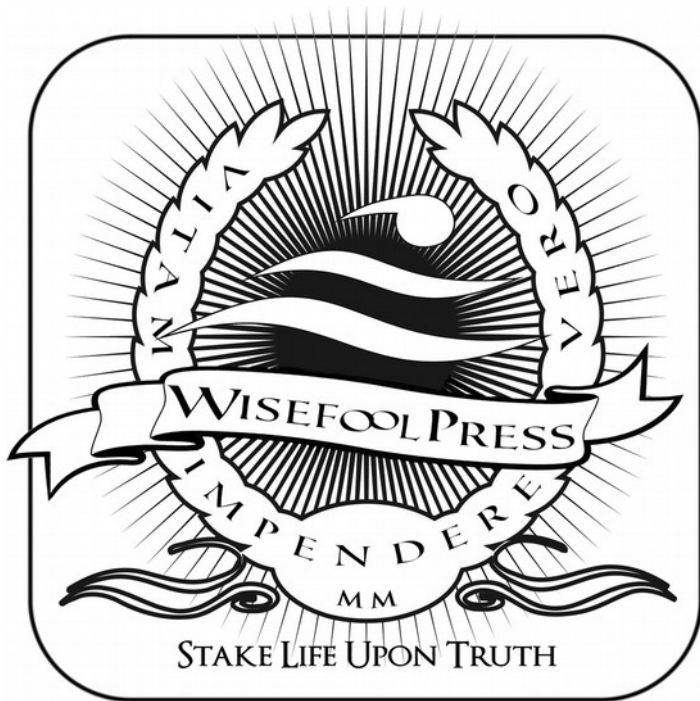




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John