

In the world of Samsara...

by

Jordan Zea

PART ONE

In which Nap leaves his home town of Ignorance and travels through Consciousness and Nameandform; makes friends (among them Tara Green), an enemy, and ignores a stranger; and in which he learns about the First Noble Truth.

Ignorance

In the world of Samsara was a place called Ignorance. In this place called Ignorance lived a being called Nap. Nap, like all the other beings living in Ignorance, was of the contaminated appropriated aggregate tribe – Conappaggs – for short. Being a part of this tribe meant that you had five attributes: form, feeling, discrimination, compositional factors and consciousness. These five attributes were bestowed upon you when entering Ignorance. It was with these five attributes that the Conappaggs viewed the world of Samsara.

Nap was no different from the other Conappaggs. He lived in Ignorance, therefore he had these five attributes, and thus viewed the world through these. However, Nap was beginning to change; he wanted to step outside the boundaries of Ignorance. His work as a traveling musician had enabled him to explore the different areas of ignorance and to meet the many kinds of beings that inhabited these places.

After traveling the circuit for many years he began to notice a pattern emerging amongst the beings of the towns he played in. He noticed that the beings living in Hurryup seemed to be extremely impatient and couldn't wait for his act to finish so they could watch the next one. Then in Allforme they were greedy. They wanted to see him play but they didn't want to pay. In Onlyme they were jealous; they didn't want him to leave and play in other places. They had become very attached to him and wanted him to stay in Onlyme forever. In Shutup they would get angry if he didn't play the songs they wanted to hear and they would boo and hiss at him. In his hometown of Ignorance, which was actually the capital of Ignorance, they were a mix of angry, greedy, impatient *and* jealous.

Once Nap had noticed this pattern of unhappiness there was no turning back. He wasn't satisfied with life in Ignorance anymore. He vowed to travel far and wide until he found a place where beings were happier.

Now, apart from being widely traveled (within Ignorance that is) Nap was also widely read. He had once read of a place called Bodhicitta where the beings of the Bodhisattva tribe were very happy and very kind to each other, and worked only to help their fellow beings. He thought finding Bodhicitta would be a good place to start.

Nap wasn't quite sure how he would find Bodhicitta though, for the book he read wasn't too clear on where Bodhicitta was in relation to Ignorance. He asked around but no one knew how to find Bodhicitta. He looked for books in the library but he couldn't find a map with Bodhicitta on it. Eventually he decided that the best thing to do would be to leave Ignorance and seek directions once he was on the path.

Not knowing where Bodhicitta was, or what to expect once he got there, he wasn't sure of what to pack. Best to travel light he thought, and not carry too much baggage. So he threw some clothes into a small bag, added his piano accordion and some food and water, and he was packed. To carry him on his journey he chose two grey horses, Karma and Delusion. He would ride Karma, and Delusion would carry his baggage. Although Nap didn't fully understand, he had a sense of enormity about his journey. He was going where no Conappagg (that he knew) had gone before.

Karmic Action

So on a fairly nice day, (it wasn't raining or anything) Nap set off from Ignorance in search of happiness and Bodhicitta. As this was his first trip outside of Ignorance, Nap was very excited. He traveled for a day and a night, carried along by Karma and Delusion. Not long into his second day he came across a place called Karmic Action.

Nap thought it strange that he had never heard of Karmic Action. But when living in Ignorance it was easy to become blind to what lay beyond. There was so much happening in Ignorance that you barely had time to contemplate other places.

As Nap rode farther on he came across a bazaar filled with people displaying their art and craft. It was bright and colourful and Nap thought it might be a chance to see what went on in Karmic Action. He noticed a crowd gathering, so he wandered over to take a look. They were milling around a young man selling clay pots. The pots were beautiful, glazed in opulent colours. The young man had a warm and friendly nature and was spending a lot of time explaining how each pot was designed and how it was best used. Some were for cooking, others for storing grain or holding water. His warmth and kind nature seemed to be having a positive effect on people and consequently many were buying his pots.

Friend, Enemy and Stranger

Nap explained how he had no use for a pot on his travels but he thanked the young man all the same for being so friendly and taking the time to talk to him about his pots. As he walked away he became aware of how easily a stranger could become a friend. A few stalls along he came across another potter, an old man, who was selling cracked and drab colored pots. His stall was in stark contrast to the young man's. As Nap approached the stall he heard the potter telling the story of how the young man selling the beautiful pots had once worked for him. So Nap, interested, stopped to listen.

The potter spoke of how the young man had known nothing of pottery when he came to work for him. He had trained him and taught him all that knew. Then, according to the

potter, when the old man's health was failing and he needed the young man to run his stall and make the pots, the young man abandoned him and went out on his own. The potter was very bitter and angry because of this, and it had affected his work. His pots weren't selling and this made him even angrier. His angry nature was having a negative effect on his customers and consequently no one wanted to buy his pots.

Nap found it hard to believe that the young man whom he now considered as his friend could treat the potter so badly. He decided that the old man was bitter and angry and that he didn't like him very much. As he walked away he became aware of how easily a stranger could become an enemy.

The last thing Nap expected to find at this bazaar was another potter's stall, but that he did. A woman ran this third stall and her pots were neither beautiful nor drab. She herself was neither friendly nor angry and consequently she was having a neutral affect on her customers. Some were buying, some were not. Nap felt indifferent to this woman and neither was he interested in her pots, so he walked away and this stranger remained a stranger. He'd had enough of this bazaar and its people, it was time to leave and find a place to camp and reflect on the day's events.

Meeting Tara Green

Not far from the bazaar he found a quiet spot beside a river, the perfect place to tend to Karma and Delusion. He had just finished lighting the fire when he heard the sound of oars hitting the water. He looked out onto the river and saw a woman approaching in a small rowboat. Wondering where she was headed he walked down to the river's edge to help her from the boat. She had long black hair and beautiful river green eyes and when she looked at him he felt like he'd known her forever. Her name was Tara Green. Nap offered her tea and a seat by his fire and before he realised it, he was telling her of his search for Bodhicitta and a life of happiness.

Tara listened patiently and waited for him to finish before she spoke. Her voice was strong and seemed to clear his head of all other thoughts, even Karma and Delusion were calmed by her presence. She told him that his search for happiness would not be easy. He would have to travel through 12 places, each one linked to the last, and he would learn of the six realms of existence, the four noble truths and many things in between.

Nap was intrigued by this beautiful woman who knew so much. He asked her if she would like to join him on his journey. Tara was eager to tell him of the 1st Noble Truth, however she was unwilling to join him on his journey with Karma and Delusion. With a slightly bruised ego, Nap poured her more tea and sat back to listen, aware that she was about to impart some words of wisdom.

The First Noble Truth

"The 1st Noble Truth is the truth of suffering and there are three things you must know in relation to the truth of suffering," she told him. "You must know the function of this truth. You must understand the nature of true suffering, and you must realise the

completed effect of the truth of true suffering. You already know the function,” she added. Nap looked at her quizzically. “The function of the 1st Noble Truth, the truth of suffering, is to acknowledge that suffering exists.” Nap had seen much suffering on his travels, it was the very reason he had started this journey. He took a moment to digest all that she had said, then asked her why he needed to know all these things, after all he was only looking for Bodhicitta. He didn’t want to change Samsara!

Tara, laughing, rose to leave. She didn’t answer his question but told him that Karma and Delusion would carry him through the next twelve places but that eventually he would have to abandon them for they couldn’t carry him to Bodhicitta.

As Nap stood on the riverbank waving to Tara as she rowed back from whence she came, he couldn’t help but think that he could have found happiness with such a beautiful and intelligent woman and saved himself the bother of finding Bodhicitta. But alas it was not to be.

Consciousness

Nap didn’t dwell long in Karmic Action. Consciousness was the next town, linked to this one by a long and desolate road. It would provide him with a good opportunity to meditate on the idea of the 1st Noble Truth. As he neared the border of Consciousness, bouncing along on Karma and Delusion, he wondered if he would find the nature and the completed effect of true suffering there.

Consciousness was a strange town, the streets were lined with fruit trees and the fruit trees were lined with monkeys. They were swinging from tree to tree with one hand and holding fruit in the other. Not far into the town Nap came to a crossroad. On each corner of the crossroad was a pub. He’d had a long ride and the thought of a bath and a night in a proper bed was most appealing. A beer in each one would help him to decide which one to bunk at. He chose the Hotel Impermanent for his first ale. It was a friendly atmosphere with lots of merriment.

More on the First Noble Truth

He struck up a conversation with a local and asked how the pub got its name. Apparently the owner would close down the pub for a week each month and totally refurbish the bar. Hence the name Hotel Impermanent – always changing. It kept the drinkers interested, and with four pubs so close, you needed to keep them interested.

At The Miserable he couldn’t finish his beer quick enough. The faces at the bar were longer than his legs. They were not big on atmosphere in that bar. Bar Empty across the road was overflowing with people. They were spilling out into the street, he couldn’t even make it to the bar.

The Selfless Inn was full of intellectual types discussing the existence of ego and playing chess. Nap found a stool at the bar and ordered a beer. At least he could hear himself think in this pub. The fellow seated beside him who introduced himself as Tomwait could

tell that Nap wasn't a local and asked him what he thought of Consciousness. He told him that he had only seen the pubs so far and commented on the strange names.

"The names are the four attributes of the nature of true suffering" Tomwait told him. "Here in Consciousness we need to be reminded of suffering, its nature and the four misconceptions that knowing this overcomes. We have named Hotel Impermanent to remind us that suffering is impermanent and this helps us to overcome the misconception that suffering is permanent. Then there's The Miserable, for suffering, as you know, is miserable. This helps us to overcome the misconception that suffering is clean and pure. Bar Empty reminds us that suffering is empty. This helps us to overcome the misconception that there is a self that has its own separate entity. And last but not least The Selfless Inn reminds us that suffering is selfless. This helps to overcome the misconception that there is a self that is under its own power," he concluded.

Nap hadn't expected such a long explanation for the names of pubs, but he was very glad for now he knew the function and nature of the 1st Noble Truth. He finished his beer with Tomwait and then retired to a room above The Selfless Inn. He was too tired to decide on which pub was the better to board in.

As he lay in bed after a relaxing warm bath he reflected on how easy it was to find the nature of true suffering. In fact, he thought that so far, everything about his journey had been relatively easy. He'd noticed that he had no control over Karma and Delusion. They seemed to know the way he was headed and they were taking him there, like it or not. He hoped that finding the completed effect of true suffering would be as easy.

Name and Form

On the border of Consciousness and Nameandform was a mountain range called The Kinds of Consciousness. This mountain range had six peaks Eye, Ear, Nose, Tongue, Body and Mind. 'The Kinds' as they were known locally, afforded a fantastic view down into the valley of Nameandform. Nameandform was built around a lake and was known for its fishing. Nap loved to fish, and as he looked down on the lake from Mt Body, he decided he would find a Nameandformian to take him fishing.

Once he was in the town he had no problem finding a willing local. There were boats and fisherman everywhere, and only an hour after Karma and Delusion had led him into town, he was sitting in the middle of the lake in a finely crafted timber boat with a rod in his hand. Cohen was his willing local, who was only too happy to spend the day fishing and listening to Nap play his accordion. He proved to be an interesting companion.

The Six Realms

According to Cohen, all of the beings Nap had met on his travels, and all the beings he was yet to meet, had the same five attributes as the Conappaggs – those of form, feeling, discrimination, compositional factors and consciousness. And apparently all of these beings – Conappaggs included – belonged to the realm of the Humans. Nap said that he'd heard that there were six realms of existence and asked Cohen if he knew of the others.

There were the animal realms, the hungry ghost realms, the hell realms and the god and demi god realms, Cohen told him. The Humans, gods and demi-gods belong to the upper realms and the animals, hungry ghosts and the hells belong to the lower realms.

Nap was amazed that he had never heard any of this before. Lucky, he thought, that he decided to leave Ignorance or he'd still be in the dark. Actually, it *was* getting dark out there on the lake, so they headed in. Cohen had offered Nap a bed at his cabin on the edge of the lake and Nap had gratefully accepted. In between talking, they had managed to catch a few trout during the day, so they fried them up with some garlic and lemon and had them for dinner.

And Yet More on the First Noble Truth

After dinner they continued their talk. Nap, wanting to show off his new found wisdom began to tell Cohen of the 1st Noble Truth, the truth of suffering. He told him of the function and the nature, but he had to stop at the completed effect for that he wasn't sure of. Cohen wasn't one to interrupt, so he let Nap finish before telling him that he knew of true suffering, and what's more not only did he know the completed effect, but he also knew the definition of true suffering. Nap felt rather foolish to have tried to impress Cohen, but his thirst for knowledge overcame his embarrassment. Clearing away the dishes he asked Cohen if he would share his insights with him. Cohen jokingly asked if there was anything else he could do for him besides take him fishing, cook him dinner, give him a place to stay and share these words of wisdom with him.

Once Cohen had finished being a wiseass he answered, "the definition of true suffering is that which is counted as a contaminated effect and belongs to the thoroughly afflicted side of truth." Cohen noticed the blank look on Nap's face and told him not to worry; one day soon he would understand what that meant.

Nap hoped he was right. This search for happiness was becoming more involuted by the day. "You've already worked out the completed effect," continued Cohen. "When you told me that you felt like you had no control over Karma and Delusion, and that they seemed to know where they were taking you. You answered your own question. The completed effect of the 1st Noble Truth is that suffering is understood to mean that while we are under the influence of contaminated actions and afflictions, we have no control. "

Nap went to sleep with a mind wearied from thought. He'd spent the rest of the evening on the deck contemplating what the afflicted side of truth could mean.

In the morning he thanked Cohen, promised to visit if he was ever in Nameandform again, and headed off in the direction of Sixsense Organs.

PART TWO

In which Nap meets the cousins Tara Yellow and Tara White; travels through Sixsense Organs and Contact which then lead on to Feeling and Craving (with a brief dalliance with newly-met Sheila); finds out the real nature of his trusty steeds Karma and Delusion; and learns about True Origins and True Cessations.

Six Sense Organs

As Nap rode along with Karma and Delusion leading the way as usual, his thoughts turned to suffering. If suffering was impermanent then there must be a way to stop it for good. And if you can stop it for good then that must be happiness, the absence of true suffering. So why do we suffer? There must be a cause.

Nap was plodding along the road thinking in this vein, questioning all that he'd learnt in the past few days when he heard a deep rumbling sound from behind him. He stopped and turned to look back. All he could see was a dark shape in a whirl of dust careering down the road towards him. It wasn't long until the dark shape had gone hurtling by. It was a gypsy van pulled by four white horses and being driven by a woman with a mane of luscious blond hair. Nap wondered where she was headed in such a hurry.

It was just on dusk when Nap rode into Sixsense Organs. There were rows and rows of adobe style houses all looking very homely and lived in. But as Nap rode further into town he began to notice something strange. There were no people about. In fact, he began to get the feeling that there were no people anywhere in the town. He looked in the general store and the pub, but there was no one about. He even went so far as to knock on a door of one of the houses, but there was no answer and he couldn't hear any movement either.

Meeting Tara Yellow

Then, just as he was thinking this place was giving him the creeps he heard a loud bang. He walked towards the direction of the noise, and as he rounded the corner he saw the gypsy wagon that had passed him earlier. The noise had come from the shutter being opened on the side of the wagon. There was a sign below it that Nap hadn't been able to read earlier (for it went past a breakneck speed). It was painted in bright fanciful colours and read "Yellow Tara's Fine Food." He was wondering if the woman with the blond hair was Tara herself, when she thrust her head through the window below the shutter. Nap was startled but glad to see a live being in this town.

She introduced herself as (strangely enough) Tara Yellow, cousin to Tara Green, and announced that she would feed him if he were hungry. Nap, never one to refuse an offer of anything (especially food) from a beautiful woman, accepted. On the other side of the wagon were a table and two chairs. Nap sat himself down and waited for his food. "It's a small world," he thought and wondered what the chances were of running into a cousin of Tara Green out here in the Never-never.

He could smell strange and exotic smells coming from the wagon, and hoped he would like what she was cooking. She brought out two glasses and a bottle of red wine and they drank and talked while they waited for the food to cook. She knew of his knowledge of the 1st Noble Truth and that he had pondered its cause. At first he thought that Tara Green must have told her, but then he remembered that she had only told him the function of true suffering. He asked her how she knew that he knew. “Women’s intuition” was all she would say.

Nap was beginning to think that he was the only human who hadn’t heard of the Four Noble Truths, for it was all that people would talk about. Wanting to change the subject for a while, Nap asked Tara Yellow what she was doing in this deserted town.

The Second Noble Truth

The answer he received was not what he wanted to hear. She told him that Tara Green had sent her to tell him of the 2nd Noble Truth. Even though he was interested in this stuff he wouldn’t have minded a night off. Nap promised himself then and there that he would let his hair down in the next town. All this talk of suffering was bringing him down.

Tara Yellow filled the table with dish after dish of mouthwatering food, all of it vegetarian. They ate and drank and discussed different ideas of what may be going on in the town before Tara got down to the nitty-gritty. She began by telling Nap that he was right, that suffering did have a cause and that that brought them to the 2nd Noble Truth, which was the truth of origin. (No, not the state of origin!) Nap asked whether he must know three things in relation to this truth as well. Not only did he need to know the function, nature and completed effect, but also the definition and what’s more they were staying up until he did, she told him!

Nap’s lesson began with the definition, which was ‘that which is counted as a contaminated cause and belongs to the thoroughly afflicted side of truth’.

He had to ask what all this afflicted side of truth business was. He recalled that his buddy Cohen had mentioned it as well, in relation to the truth of suffering. “There are two sides of truth,” she told him, “the thoroughly afflicted side and the pure side. True suffering and true origin belong to the thoroughly afflicted side, and the other two truths of which you will learn soon enough, belong to the pure side.”

The night rolled along and they drank more and more wine. Nap wasn’t a big drinker, so he was surprised to find that after a bottle of wine he wasn’t drunk. He looked at the label and it read “Tara Family Vintage. Guaranteed to show you the essence of mere clarity and knowing. Non – Alcoholic.” Over dessert, which was white chocolate mudcake with lashings of cream, Tara launched into the guts of true origins, the nature and the misconceptions that knowing the nature overcomes. It appeared that the nature of true origins is to be causes, origins, incessant producers and conditions. This understanding would overcome the misconception that suffering has no cause, that the suffering of origin has only one cause, that suffering is created by a deity, and that the states of suffering are impermanent but their nature is permanent.

Nap was almost falling asleep by this stage. He was compelled to listen but he couldn't help nodding off on occasion. Tara sent him to bed and told him he could do the dishes in the morning. Nap threw down his swag to one side of the wagon, and as he was falling asleep, his last thought was to ask Tara if he was any closer to Bodhicitta.

When Nap awoke, Tara Yellow was gone. They had a habit of racing off, these Taras. He found pinned to his swag, a note. It read, "the completed effect of our meditation upon the true origins of suffering is to have abandoned the causes of suffering. Bodhicitta is as far away as you make it. Love, Tara Yellow."

Contact

Nap couldn't see any point in hanging around Sixsense Organs, he still hadn't seen a soul, so he packed up his swag and headed out of town. The main road to Contact was bumper-to-bumper (actually nose hole to asshole), horses and people everywhere. They were dressed in bright, feathery costumes with lots of bare flesh between the feathers. It was Carnivale time in Contact. That explained where all the Sixsense Organer's had gone. Perfect timing, thought Nap, he was more than ready to party.

By the time he reached Contact, Carnivale was in full swing. It was a harbour town so the party had spread from the streets onto wharves, pontoons, boats and anything else that could float. Nap joined a group of musicians for the night and busked and danced his little heart out. He found himself drawn to one musician in particular. Her name was Sheila and she wore a feline mask and a tail, with strategically placed feathers on her body. She played a mean tambourine and had Nap mesmerised.

Debauchery was the theme of the evening. There were couples of every shape and size coming together in any available space. Luckily for Nap, Sheila was as enamored of him as he of she, and in the early hours of the morning they made their way back to Sheila's room for their own private party.

Later in the morning, feeling rather pleased with himself, Nap left Sheila's room via the window. She was staying in a boarding house for women and was not meant to have men in her room. He made his way through the debris-strewn streets to where he had left Karma and Delusion. Contact wasn't looking very glamorous in the daylight. There were couples laying asleep half in half and half out of the gutters, surrounded by empty bottles and discarded streamers. Nap decided to beat the traffic and head out of town early.

With Karma and Delusion once again leading the way, they pointed him north. That meant he was beginning to arc back towards Ignorance. They had lead him on an interesting journey so far, no need to doubt them yet. A dusty old signpost announced that the next town was Feeling and was at least two days ride away. Plenty of time for Nap to think over the first and second Noble Truth.

"I now know many things about suffering in Samsara," he thought. "I know that if I am suffering I can't be happy, that there is a cause to suffering and that suffering can end. It is impermanent. So if there is a cause to suffering, then what is it? The cause of most of

my suffering is other people,” he thought. “But if suffering is impermanent then all people would have to start being a lot nicer to me, or everyone would have to die. Or maybe *I* would have to die.” None of those options seemed very realistic or particularly noble. There must be a more rational explanation. “No doubt all will be revealed if I am patient,” he mused.

Feeling

On the morning of the third day since leaving Contact, he hit Feeling. Over the main road into to town was an arch made of woven tree branches. Atop it was a rooster, a snake and a pig – replicas of course – all made of clay. “Strange group of animals,” thought Nap, “I hope they’re not into voodoo in this town.” But in fact Feeling was a farming town, a good place for Nap to replenish his stores.

When he reached the town centre he saw a crowd gathered around the doctor’s surgery. He parked Karma and Delusion and wandered into the General (and only) Store. Whilst perusing the shelves for something special to send to Sheila, he overheard the locals talking. The cause of the crowd outside was a teenager with an arrow in his eye. Apparently this teenager and his brother wanted to join the circus and had been practicing a trick where the brother shot an arrow into the air and the teenager was to catch it in his teeth. Needless to say, he missed. He claimed the sun had got in the way, but the locals thought it was the fact that he only had one eye left from the last time it went wrong.

Delusion and Karma

Nap purchased some supplies for his trip. He was unable to find anything suitable for Sheila in the General Store. After he added the extra weight to Karma and Delusion, he walked over to a park opposite to lie in the sun for a while. In the middle of the park was a huge rock serving as a monument. It had a plaque on it engraved with a picture of a rooster, a pig and a snake. Below the rooster was the word ‘greed,’ below the pig was the word ‘ignorance’ and below the snake was the word ‘hatred’. It then read, ‘There are two causes of suffering. They are karma and delusion. These three animals are chosen to remind us of delusion, the primary cause of suffering.’ All this time, and Nap didn’t know that his horses were the main cause of all his (and for that matter everyone else’s) suffering. Not quite the rational answer he was looking for. Perhaps they meant that delusion was the afflictive emotions of greed, hatred and ignorance. Karma, he already knew, was the law of cause and effect.

He lay in the sun and thought of how that fitted in with all that he’d learnt so far. He now knew the cause of his suffering (although he wasn’t sure what he was ignorant of exactly) and things were beginning to make sense. He couldn’t blame others for his suffering, for as he reasoned before, if they didn’t start treating him better they would all have to die. (*He* wasn’t about to.) So if he couldn’t blame others, that left only him. Therefore he would have to take responsibility for his own suffering. Nap remembered Tara’s note, ‘the completed effect of meditating on the true origins of suffering is to have abandoned the causes of suffering’. “Does that mean that if I can remove greed, ignorance and hatred

from my mind, my suffering will stop?” he wondered. This thought caused his brain to ache. He was taking his mind to places it had never been before.

Craving

All that thinking had made him hungry. He had a picnic in the park and then made tracks for Craving; it wasn't far off. He made it just on nightfall, riding in as Craving was settling down for the night. The only place open was a very seedy looking bar. Nap sauntered, in not because he was interested in having a drink, but in the hope of finding somewhere to stay. The barman was tall and skinny, his face was gaunt and his skin looked paper-thin. He had a tattoo of a dragon on his right shoulder and a monkey on his left. The best place to stay was at the old vineyards on the other side of town he told Nap.

Nap wasn't sure whether to trust this guy, but he wasn't swamped with options, so off to the vineyards it was. The house attached to the vineyards was huge. He could just make out the façade in the dark. There was a faint light in one of the windows, so he knocked at the door, hoping that someone would answer. Eventually a disheveled, bleary eyed, middle-aged man answered the door. Nap introduced himself and asked for a room. The man pointed in the direction of a staircase and then disappeared into the bowels of the house.

Nap went upstairs and chose the first room he came to. It was closest to the stairs in case he needed to make a quick get-away. Later on in the night he heard a clock strike twelve somewhere in the house and someone stagger past his room bouncing off the walls. He slept soundly after that, but was woken early by the sound of a woman singing.

He dressed hurriedly and followed her voice out into the garden. In the light of day Nap could see that the vineyards had been neglected. In fact the trellises where the vines once hung were the only evidence of a vineyard at all. Behind the house was a beautiful garden, and unlike the vineyards, it was well kept and expertly manicured. He could hear the woman singing from the other end.

The Third Noble Truth

A towering thick hedge surrounded the garden. Once inside, he could see that the hedge parted to leave an entrance into another garden. In the middle of this first garden was a flowerbed. The flowers were planted systematically and Nap noticed that they spelled out 'cessation'. Off to one side of the flowerbed was a gazebo. It was made from timber and had stained glass panels in the roof. He walked inside and looked up. The glazing was exquisite, the colours were rich and the detail was finely crafted. Like the flowers the glass had been placed to spell something, 'Liberation does not exist at all', it read. Nap, beginning to recognise the signs, realised that this must be a misconception of the 3rd Noble Truth and therefore cessation must be an attribute of the 3rd Noble Truth. He walked between the hedges into the next garden. At first glance, except for the gardener in the far corner, it was very similar to the previous one.

Nap stopped for a while and talked to the gardener, his curiosity piqued by the garden. He had forgotten his original mission to find the woman singing. The gardener's name was Levi; he worked for Mr. Ramone the man Nap had met at the door last night.

The vineyards, the house and the garden all belonged to Mr. Ramone, Levi told him. The garden was Mrs. Ramone's handy-work, but she no longer lived there. She had left Mr. Ramone because he drank too much. He was unable to control himself when it came to alcohol. After she had left, Mr. Ramone became depressed and this caused him to drink more. He stopped working in the vineyards; the only thing he was interested in was keeping the gardens just as Mrs. Ramone had left them. He wanted them to serve as a reminder of her, Levi thought.

The flowerbed in this garden read 'peace' and the gazebo roof had written 'some contaminated state is liberation' in different coloured glass this time. Levi told him that it was just as Nap suspected; these were the attributes of the 3rd Noble Truth and the misconceptions they overcome. What he couldn't tell him was why Mrs. Ramone wanted these things in her garden.

Meeting Tara White

Remembering his reason for entering the gardens, Nap continued on into the next. There wasn't a woman singing in this one either, but the flowerbed read 'excellence' and the gazebo read 'what is actually a state of suffering is a state of liberation'. He hoped that he might find out soon what the 3rd Noble Truth actually was. The woman's voice was sounding a lot closer now. He walked into the next garden and found the owner of the voice seated in the gazebo. She was a very serene looking woman with cropped white hair. She introduced herself as Tara White cousin of Tara Green and Tara Yellow. She asked Nap what he thought of the gardens and if he had figured out what the 3rd Noble Truth was. Before answering he looked up at the roof of the gazebo and read 'although liberation exists, one can fall from it'. He then walked over to the flowerbed and read 'definite emergence'.

He stood there thinking, "the four attributes of the 3rd Noble Truth are cessation, peace, excellence and definite emergence. They overcome the misconception that liberation does not exist at all, that some contaminated state is liberation, that what is actually a state of suffering is a state of liberation, and that although liberation exists, one can fall from it." He remembered that Tara Yellow had told him that the 3rd and 4th Noble Truth belonged to the pure side of truth, and then he saw the pattern. The first two Noble Truths had their truth as one of the attributes. If that was the case, then he only had to figure out which one it was.

He cast his thoughts back to the day before in the park, when he was wondering if his suffering would stop if he were to remove greed, ignorance and hatred from his mind. If he knew that there was suffering, and that suffering had a cause, then maybe what came next was how to stop it. If so, then the 3rd Noble Truth would be that of cessation.

Tara confirmed that he was right. “The 3rd Noble Truth is the truth of cessation and as before you must know the definition, the function and the completed effect.” Nap was feeling pleased with himself for guessing the 3rd Noble Truth, but he wasn’t confident enough to have a stab at these. Tara White was very calm, cool and collected. Although she looked very youthful, Nap supposed she must be rather old, as her hair had turned completely white. She gave him the feeling that she would sit with him all day if that were how long it took. But she could sit there for three eons, he wasn’t prepared to have a go he thought. After a moment of silence, whilst these thoughts crossed Nap’s mind, Tara began with the definition. “True cessations is a freedom, in which an object of abandonment corresponding to the uninterrupted path that is the means for attaining it, has been abandoned. The function of the 3rd Noble Truth is to establish for certain the total extinguishment of a suffering by its antidote,” she told him.

“Oh good” thought Nap, “then there is a tried and true way to stop suffering, I don’t have to figure it out for myself.”

“The completed effect of our meditation on the 3rd Noble Truth,” she continued “is to experience the cessation of suffering.”

Nap didn’t like his chances of remembering all that, but he hoped that he would retain some of it. Maybe he could try and write some of it into a song and remember it that way. Tara and Nap sat side by side in the gazebo for half the day, lost in their own thoughts. It was Nap that spoke first, asking Tara if she had any more cousins, for he had one more truth to learn of and he supposed it would be a Tara that taught it to him. She laughed and told him that he would have to wait and see.

They parted company in the early afternoon, Nap heading back through the gardens to the house, and Tara White seeming to just drift away. Nap wasn’t too eager to run into Mr. Ramone. He was sure that he wouldn’t know what to say to him, so he spent the night holed up in his room and next morning at first light he set off in the direction of Grasping. (He left a note thanking Mr. Ramone and explaining that he was in a hurry. He wasn’t a total ingrate).

PART THREE

In which, nearing the end of his adventure, Nap travels through Grasping, Becoming, Rebirth, and Ageinganddying; he looks for a self that he inexplicably cannot find; meets the last of the cousins Tara Red; and learns about the Truth of Path, discovering a map of the 12 towns in Samsara linked together, and a handy manual about death.

Grasping

As he rode along, he counted that he had been through eight places since he left Ignorance. If Tara Green was right, which she had been so far, then he would have four more to go before..... “Before what? ” he wondered. Before he found Bodhicitta? Tara Yellow had told him that Bodhicitta was as far away as he made it. He didn’t really understand that. In fact there were a few things he didn’t understand, like, all these realms, what was he ignorant of, and why he felt as if he was being hurried along through the towns?

It was a rocky path from Craving to Grasping. He kept riding over rock strewn hills and expecting to see Grasping on the other side. But it wasn’t, and up another hill he’d go, hoping to see it on the next side. This went on for most of the day and by the time he finally did see Grasping on the other side he’d nearly driven himself mad.

Grasping was similar to Consciousness in the way that its streets were lined with fruit trees, and in the fruit trees were hundreds of monkeys. This time however, they weren’t swinging from tree to tree, but sitting in the trees gorging themselves on the fruit. When Nap arrived there was a protest march blocking the main street.

It consisted of ten very angry people waving banners and shouting slogans. As far as Nap could make out, they were protesting against the monkeys. They wanted them removed from the trees, they saw them as a menace leaving mess everywhere, making a huge racket, and eating all the fruit. He didn’t want to shove by, so he took a seat on a park bench beside an elderly woman who was also watching the march.

Looking for a Self but not Finding One

“The monkeys aren’t the source of their anger,” she told Nap. “It is the fact that they are ignorant of the way they truly exist that causes them to suffer.” Nap couldn’t resist asking how they truly existed; he needed to know. “One exists in dependence upon a body and mind,” she told him. “We think that there is a self that exists independent of body and mind, but there is no such self.” Once again Nap felt his brain begin to ache. The old woman misread the look on his face and told him to check for himself if he didn’t believe her. Then she left him.

He spent the next few hours alone on the bench turning his mind inside out looking for himself. His search was fruitless. The old lady was right; he could find no self independent of body and mind. He found many things that he thought he could call self,

but when he looked deeper, what appeared as self was merely the five attributes of form, feeling, discrimination, compositional factors and consciousness.

Becoming

Nap wanted some space and time to ponder his new found lack of self, so he hit the road again and pushed on towards Becoming. On the way he thought of many things. He wondered aloud to Karma and Delusion that if this grasping at a false sense of self, along with greed and hatred, was the true cause of the effect of his suffering, then what could be the true cause of the effect of the cessation of his suffering? And if there are upper and lower realms of existence, as Cohen had told him, then what caused you to be born in one or the other? Why have his two faithful horses been born in the animal realm and not that of a human? He could see the difference between the upper and lower realms. Obviously being born as a God would be preferable to being born in the hells. “Maybe there is something we can do to affect which realm we will be born into. Could it be another case of cause and effect?” Nap hoped there was something he could do; he didn’t much like the idea of living in any of the lower realms.

By the time he had finished with all these thoughts, night had fallen. He was still a little way off Becoming so he decided not to push it and set up camp by the roadside. The evening passed uneventfully (as you would imagine it would by the side of the road) and Nap was up early next morn wanting to reach Becoming before breakfast.

And that he did. Arriving just in time to smell the aroma of fresh coffee and burnt toast coming from Café Arya, Nap found himself a seat against the wall and ordered eggs, toast and coffee from the very pregnant waitress Ms Lydia Lunch. The walls of Café Arya were covered with graffiti. There was a good reason for this (apart from the fact that it looked quite interesting). He soon discovered and that was to keep you occupied whilst you endured the long wait for your food. Interestingly enough, although the first thing Nap read was ‘True paths is the 4th Noble Truth,’ and below that ‘the definition of true paths is an exalted knower in an Arya’s continuum,’ he couldn’t find anymore on the 4th Noble truth at his table. So he moved around the room looking for the function, the nature and the completed effect. On the other side of the room near the door he found ‘the function of true paths is to cause us to proceed unerringly to our respective liberation’ and ‘the completed effect of our meditation upon the 4th Noble Truth is to have realised the path out of suffering.’ He also found Ms Lunch’s own offering; “Assumption is the root of all ignorance”, scrawled near the cash register.

He continued to search for the nature of true paths but he couldn’t find it. Ms Lunch finally brought him his breakfast and a note. She was given the note yesterday by a woman and told to give it to a man fitting his description, if his name was Nap, she told him. He told her that his name was in fact Nap and he opened the note. It read ‘Finish your breakfast and make haste to Rebirth’. It was signed Tara Red.

Rebirth

He didn't question how she knew he'd be there or how he'd be having breakfast for that matter. He did as he was bid and by late afternoon he was riding into Rebirth. He was counting on Tara Red finding him as she had in Becoming, for he had no idea where to find her.

Meeting Tara Red

And that she did. As Nap was walking past a row of houses, a little hand made its way into his. He looked down to see a little girl staring up at him with a very serious face. She pointed in the direction of one of the houses and tugged at his hand. He let himself be led inside to a room at the back of the house. As they approached the door he could hear a woman's muffled screams. Always willing to come to a woman's rescue, Nap burst into the room. What he found was not what he was expecting. Lying on a bed, legs apart, was a woman giving birth. He barely had time to recover from the shock of coming face to face with a strange woman's innards, before another woman with masses of fiery red hair, threw a towel at him. This, he assumed, was Tara Red. She ordered him to take the towel and get the saucepan from the stove; they were in urgent need of water.

Their need was indeed urgent; Nap had only just made it back from the kitchen when the baby's head appeared. Tara Red then ordered him to leave the room. Nap had no problem with that; he couldn't get out of there fast enough. He sat outside the room with the little girl and awaited his next command. They could hear the baby and the mother crying from inside the room. Tara Red soon emerged and sent the little girl in to see her mother and baby brother.

The Forth Noble Truth

Tara Red sat down beside Nap and launched straight into the nature of the 4th Noble Truth. "Understand the four attributes of true paths to be the nature of path, awareness, accomplishment, and definite elimination. Through understanding we can practice the path out of suffering," she told him. "This practice overcomes the four misconceptions that a path of liberation does not exist, that the wisdom realising selflessness is not a path of liberation, that a certain type of concentrative state is a path of liberation and that no path removes suffering forever."

She then told Nap to leave for Ageinganddying directly; there was an old man expecting him and he couldn't wait long. With that she disappeared into the bedroom. By this time Nap's head was spinning and he would have liked a moment to gather his wits, but he wasn't about to argue with Tara Red. He left the house and found Karma and Delusion grazing happily in the field where he'd left them.

They didn't get far along the road to Ageinganddying before night fell. He pulled the horses off to the side of the road promising himself that this would be the last roadside camp on his journey. He was too exhausted to search for firewood. He'd had the longest

and most unusual day of his life and it had taken it out of him. He was asleep as soon as his head hit the saddle.

Aging and Dying

The next day he woke refreshed and full of beans. He realised that Ageinganddying was to be the twelfth place he'd traveled to and that Tara White's prophecy had been fulfilled. He now knew of the six realms of existence, the four Noble Truths and much in between. Maybe now he'd be able to find Bodhicitta.

He made Ageinganddying by lunchtime and nearly ran over the old man he was meant to find. As Nap rounded a bend on the edge of town the old man was shuffling across the road with his cane. When he'd made it safely to the other side he motioned for Nap to follow him. He led him to a rundown shack by a stream. Inside, the shack was dark and dingy. The old man flopped onto his bed.

The Death Process

Beside the bed was a familiar looking manual. The yellow cover had slightly askew black lettering saying "Dying for Dummies: Everything you ever wanted to know about the death process but were afraid to ask". Nap quickly flicked through the table of contents. He supposed that even though he didn't know when he was going to die, there was no avoiding it, so he may as well try to be prepared, even if it wasn't exactly a topic he was most enthused about.

The book was divided into two parts. The first part had four chapters called: Earth, Water Fire and Wind. In the chapter on Earth, it explained how when one had a mirage-like vision the form element was dissolving, the eye element was absorbed, and the death process had begun. The second chapter entitled Water, explained the next vision, one of smoke, where the feeling aggregate dissolved and the ear sense absorbed. In the third chapter, Fire, one had a vision of fireflies, the aggregate of discrimination dissolved, and the sense of smell absorbed. In the fourth chapter Wind, one had a vision of a flickering flame like a candle or butter lamp, the compositional factors dissolved, and the sense of taste absorbed.

The second part of the book started with an introduction to the 80 Indicative Conceptions, and then went on to four more visions: the white appearance, red increase, black near-attainment and the clear light of death. It exhorted you to use this last very subtle stage to meditate on the nature of reality, and liberate yourself from suffering forever. This was heady stuff, Nap thought. He made a mental note to study this manual in-depth, one day when he had more time.

The Wheel of Life and the Twelve Links

In a voice barely audible, the old man spoke to Nap of his ill-health. He would die soon, he told him. He had been waiting for Nap to arrive for many weeks, hanging on so he could present him with a map. He then pointed towards a box resting on a side table and told Nap to open it. Inside was a rolled up piece of paper. Nap sat beside the old man on

the bed and unrolled it. It had drawn on it a wheel, held in the jaws of a frightening looking monster. According to the old man it was a map of the twelve links of dependent origination. "It represents all that you've learnt on your travels," he told him. "The twelve pieces around the edge, each one linked to the next, show the sequence of the causes for continued uncontrolled rebirth in Samsara."

Nap read aloud the names of the twelve links: "ignorance, karmic action, consciousness, name and form, six sense organs, contact, feeling, craving, grasping, becoming, rebirth, ageing and dying."

"The circle within that represents the six realms of existence, divided up into upper and lower realms. In the upper are those of the humans and the gods and demi-gods. The lower realms consist of the animal realm, the hell realm and that of the hungry ghost. The circle within that circle is divided into two halves, one half being white and representing white karma, or virtuous activity, and the other being black, and representing black karma or non-virtuous activity. It is practicing either virtuous activity or non-virtuous activity that determines which realm you are reborn into," the old man added.

"That answers that question," thought Nap.

"The circle within this one represents the primary cause for our suffering in Samsara, the delusions of ignorance, greed and hatred. Above the monster known as Yama, the lord of death, is a picture of the moon on the left and the Buddha on the right. The Buddha is pointing towards the moon and he represents True Paths. The moon represents True Cessations." Nap hadn't heard of the Buddha before, so the old man informed him that he was the one who discovered all this wisdom. "The circles of karma and delusion also represent True Origins, and the circle of the six realms of existence represents True Suffering."

Nap was amazed that this little map could contain so much. The old man announced that he was very tired and he asked Nap if he would leave. But Nap wasn't leaving without asking the question "where is Bodhicitta." He hadn't traveled all this way to not find it. "Bodhicitta is the mind of enlightenment, and to find it you must have the wish to attain enlightenment for the sake of all others," he told him.

Nap left the old man in peace and wandered along by the side of the stream thinking. "So Bodhicitta is not a place at all," he thought, "but at least now I have a map of sorts to help me find it." He sat for a while contemplating his journey, he wasn't sure what he should do now that it had come to an end. "Best to keep moving" he decided, so he rounded up Karma and Delusion and hit the road once more. He had traveled up hill and down dale for a day and a half when the countryside started to become familiar. He was back in Ignorance.

"I've returned to Ignorance only to find that the journey to Bodhicitta is within. No wonder I have no need for Karma and Delusion," he thought.