

DHARMA -- VISIT FROM A HIGH LAMA

In and around the 1980s, a great many very high rinpoches were wandering around North America and willing to visit their affiliated dharma centers. As I have shared here before, there were a great many that came to our center, the Heart Center KTC (Karma Thegsum Chöling) located here in Big Rapids, Michigan.

Well, as this story goes, one of the highest rinpoches in our lineage came and stayed at our center for almost a week. He was one of the four “heart sons” of H.H. the 16th Karmapa, an eminence. I am not going to name him because someone might not like His Eminence in such a story. Who knows? Anyway, here he was and we were busy hosting him. In fact we had a local newspaper crew here to interview Rinpoche.

We were all sitting around in our living room, being courteously a little formal, when two of our kids came racing in, all out of breath, and very excited. They could hardly keep from yelling.

“There is a cat outside about to eat the baby robins! Come quick dad!” This was indeed an emergency and Margaret and I jumped up and raced outside. I forgot about our guests, but they followed along too.

And sure enough, high up at a fork in the large branches of a tree we had a nest of tiny baby birds. And as the kids said, the neighborhood cat had gotten up there and was sitting right at the edge of the bird nest with his two front paws tucked under his chest. And he couldn't have been happier, either. He was

contemplating his lunch. And these were little bitty babies.

On the way out, I had grabbed my BB gun, which was hardly very powerful at all. It was the weakest BB gun I had been able to find and the BBs just bounced off of anything it hit. I kept it around for just such emergencies as this.

I reached the tree and could see the cat was well out of reach from the ground. Do something the kids cried. I raised the BB gun and popped off a couple of shots. And they just bounced off of the cat, who paid no attention to them, but just sat there as before, contemplating his dinner. I tried again, but no use.

I had forgotten all about His Eminence, but suddenly there was a hand on my shoulder. I turned around and found myself facing the Rinpoche, only inches away. I had completely forgotten that Buddhists don't harm other beings. The Rinpoche said very firmly. "Give me the gun." I meekly handed it over to him, feeling awful.

And His Eminence then said, "Where's the cat?" And I pointed him out up on the tree branches. To my surprise, His Eminence raised the gun, fired a single BB, which hit the cat, who leaped into the air, and ran down the tree. Baby birds saved.

We all had a good laugh. And afterward, Rinpoche and I went out in the back yard and had a shooting contest at targets. I won. And that's a true story.

[Photo not by me.]

“As Bodhicitta is so precious,
May those without it now create it,
May those who have it not destroy it,
And may it ever grow and flourish”

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