

# The Temple

by Neema Oshidary

A man was walking down the street one day when he noticed a monk heading towards him. As they approached one another, the man politely stopped the monk and said, "Sorry to bother you, but I've been meaning to find a temple around here, and seeing that you are a monk, I figured you might have some suggestions."

The monk replied, "Before I can assist you, I would need to know what kind of temple you are seeking." After a moment of thought, the man responded, "Nothing too specific. I'm just looking for a temple where I can sit, and meditate, and relax after a hard day of work at the office and just take a break from all the stress and hardships in my life."

"I see," said the monk with a kind smile. "I know just the temple for you. Do you have time now to go check it out?"

"Absolutely" said the man. "I have the nothing else planned for the day. But I wouldn't want to trouble you by taking your time. If you would prefer, you could simply tell me where the temple is located and I can go check it out myself."

"Nonsense" chuckled the monk. "I have all the time in the world, and plus, it is nearly impossible to give directions to this temple as it is hidden in the depths of the forest. Follow me."

And so the monk and the man ventured off down a narrow, unpaved path that led into the heart of the forest; the monk leading the way with the man trailing close behind. Hours and hours passed as the two travelled further into the thickness of the forest, over cumbersome boulders and trickling creeks. With each passing minute, the man grew more fatigued and short of breath, but continued forward as he did not want to embarrass himself by asking the monk to stop. The monk, apparently unfazed by the strenuous hike, kept turning back to smile at the man, as if implying that they were almost at their destination. Further and further they continued. The man could feel the blisters forming on the soles of his feet and felt like his legs would collapse at any moment out of pure exhaustion. But still he pushed on, telling himself he shouldn't give up now that he had gone so far. As they continued down the seemingly endless trail, the man began lagging further and further behind, unable to keep up with the monk's consistent pace. Then, when the monk turned back to greet the man with his periodic smile, he noticed that the man had stopped and was sitting down on a large rock to the side of the trail. He walked back to the man, who was in the process of removing his shoes and massaging his aching feet, and with his usual warm smile asked, "What are you doing?"

"I am sorry, but my body is in pain and I cannot continue any further. I need to rest. I need to relax. I need a break."

"Welcome to your temple" smiled the monk.