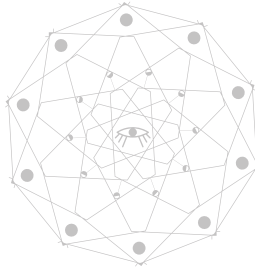


A woman in a red robe is sitting on a large, gnarled rock, looking out over a valley at sunset. A large, ancient tree with orange leaves is on the left. The sun is a large, bright circle in the sky, casting a golden glow over the landscape. The woman's hair is in a bun, and she is wearing a simple red robe. The overall mood is peaceful and contemplative.

THE ETERNAL FLAME

Ancient Wisdom for Today's Modern Leader

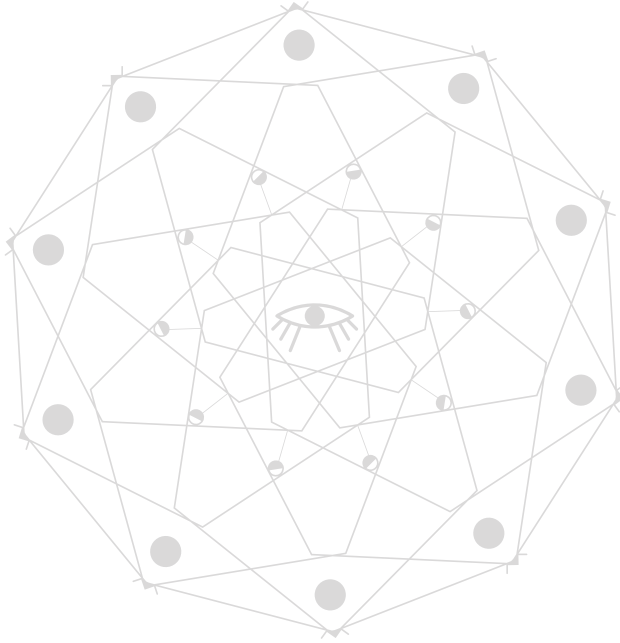
created by Keith Roberts & Ryan Avery



The Eternal Flame

Ancient Wisdom for
Today's Modern Leader

KEITH ROBERTS III
and
RYAN AVERY



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address www.Zenman.com and www.RyanAvery.com

For Gavin and Quinn, may you always find in life's journey the joy and purpose you have given me. This book, is dedicated to you—my guiding lights, my eternal flames.

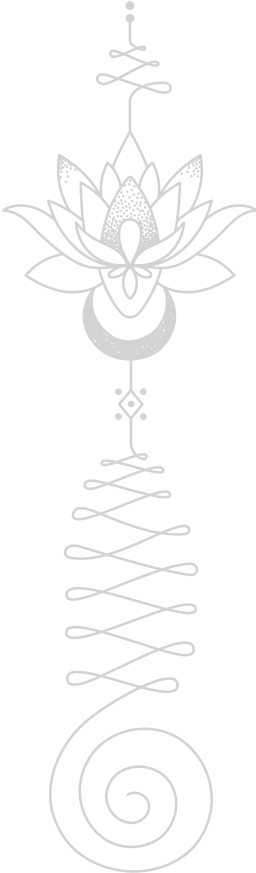
- Keith Roberts

I hope you find your purpose in this world!

- Ryan Avery

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chapter 1:

Birth of a Bodhisattva

The village of Shangri-La lay in expectant silence in the heart of the Himalayas, cradled by towering peaks and whispering winds. This was no ordinary evening in this remote Tibetan community; it was a night enshrined in prophecy, a night where the stars themselves seemed to align in a celestial cluster of something extraordinary. The villagers, a hardy and spiritual people accustomed to the caprices of nature and the mysteries of the cosmos, felt the air charged with an inexplicable energy.

Since times long forgotten, the prophecy has been whispered on the winds that swirl amidst these towering giants, carried down from the

abode of the gods, echoing through the valleys, flowing in the rivers, and nestling in the hearts of the humble villagers. It spoke of a time when a bodhisattva would emerge from its midst, a beacon of light born to illuminate the path to liberation for all beings.

Amidst this aura of anticipation, in a simple yak herder's home, a couple awaited the birth of their child. Pema and Kipu, unlike many in their village, were not born to the rugged life of the high mountains. With her gentle demeanor and nurturing soul, Pema had come from a family of weavers in a neighboring village, known for their intricate tapestries that told stories of Tibetan lore. Her hands, skilled in the art of weaving, had adapted to the rougher life of a yak herder's wife, but her heart remained as tender as the wool she once spun.

Kipu, on the other hand, was a man of the land. His lineage could be traced to generations of yak herders who had roamed the vast Himalayan expanse. His knowledge of the mountains, the weather patterns, and the ways of the yak was unparalleled. His rough exterior, shaped by the unforgiving climate and the demands of his vocation, belied a heart that held deep wells of love and an unshakable belief in the spiritual teachings that were the cornerstone of Tibetan culture.

Their union was one of love and respect, an intertwining of two souls from different walks of life, brought together by a shared sense of purpose and a deep spiritual connection. When Pema became pregnant, it was a cause for personal joy and a moment of communal celebration. In Shangri-La, every birth was a nod of hope, a continuation of lineage, and a promise to the future. But the birth of Pema and Kipu's child was clad in an air of destiny. The night Dawa was born was not like any other night in Shangri-La. The sky seemed to be in a state of expectant pause, the stars aligning in a rare configuration with the village's astrologers and wise men murmuring in hushed, awe-filled tones. This was a celestial

event not witnessed in generations, an alignment believed to herald the birth of a child of immense spiritual significance. The elders spoke of it in reverent whispers, their eyes reflecting a mixture of wonder and reverence.

In Tibetan Buddhist belief, a Bodhisattva is a being who seeks Buddhahood through the practice of compassion, selflessness, and other perfections for the benefit of all sentient beings. The birth of a Bodhisattva is not merely a blessing for the family; it is considered a divine boon for the entire community and beyond. The prophecy of a Bodhisattva's birth was a matter of great significance for Dawa's parents and the whole village.

This prophecy instilled a profound sense of responsibility and pride for Kipu and Pema. They were ordinary yak herders, living a life of simplicity and hard work. The notion that their unborn child was destined for spiritual greatness was both overwhelming and uplifting. Kipu, in particular, found a deep sense of purpose in this prophecy. He viewed his unborn child as a guiding star, a divine sign that their lives were part of a larger, more extraordinary narrative.

The villagers were also affected by this prophecy. They had always been a close-knit community, sharing joys and sorrows alike. The idea that a Bodhisattva would be born among them brought a sense of collective pride and anticipation. They are a symbol of hope and could be a future leader who would embody the values of compassion and wisdom. Her birth would be celebrated in her home and throughout the village, with prayers and offerings made in her name.

However, this prophecy also brought with it a burden of expectations. While Kipu embraced it wholeheartedly, Pema wrestled with the weight of raising a child believed to be a Bodhisattva. She feared the pressures

such a destiny could impose on Dawa and worried about how it would shape her daughter's life. Pema sought solace in the daily tasks of her life. She found comfort in the routine, the simplicity of herding the yaks, the rhythmic spinning of the wool, and the bustling preparations for the baby's arrival. Each day, she reminded herself that regardless of the prophecy, she was a mother first, and her duty was to her child - not a prophecy, not a belief, and indeed not the expectations of others.

As her due date drew near, Pema looked out at the vast expanse of the Tibetan plateau, her hand gently resting on her belly. Beneath her palm, a tiny foot kicked, a silent testament to the life thriving within her. In these quiet moments, away from the prying eyes and hushed whispers of the prophecy, Pema found peace. And in the solitude, her heart echoed a silent vow to her unborn child: she would be a mother first, a guardian of her child's innocence and joy before any prophecy.

On the day of Dawa's birth, the chill of early winter was in the air. The mountains were cloaked in a fresh blanket of snow, and the village of Shangri-La was hushed in anticipation. Pema's labor pains began at dawn, a painful rhythm announcing the imminent arrival of their child. Kipu, filled with a mixture of excitement and concern, helped Pema as best he could. He brought her warm water, stoked the fire in their humble home, and reassured her with his steady presence. But as the hours stretched on, Pema's labor didn't progress as expected. The contractions were painful, and the intervals between them didn't shorten as they should have. The village's only midwife, a seasoned woman who had ushered countless lives into the world, furrowed her brow in concern.

As the night approached, the air in their modest home grew thick with expectancy. The village elder, Ama Tsomo, renowned for her wisdom, joined them, her presence a comforting balm in the swirl of anticipation and unspoken fears. As the sun dipped below the horizon, Ama Tsomo

made the difficult decision to move Pema to a larger house in the village, one that was warmer and closer to other women who could help. The journey through the icy wind was grueling, but Pema, guided by her innate strength, made it with Kipu's support.

Once settled, the women of Shangri-La gathered around Pema, their experienced hands and comforting voices becoming her world. They whispered prayers and reassurances, their firm yet gentle touch offering Pema a lifeline amid the pain. They kept hot water ready, brought heated compresses, and took turns massaging her aching back. The prophecy, for once, was set aside as everyone focused on helping Pema bring her child safely into the world.

Throughout the night, Pema clung to her resolve. Every wave of pain was a battle, and with each contraction, she fought to bring her baby closer to birth. Her body was a battleground, wracked with pain, but her spirit remained indomitable. The most challenging moment came when Pema's strength seemed to be ebbing away. Her contractions had become unbearable, her body was exhausted, and she was on the verge of losing consciousness. In those fraught moments, Tsomo looked at Pema, her eyes holding a mix of sternness and compassion. "Remember, Pema," she said, "you're not just fighting for yourself but for the life waiting to come into this world. Your strength is her strength."

Her words seeped into Pema's haze of pain and fatigue, touching a raw, primal part of her - the part that was a mother. It was as if a dormant force within her awakened. With a newfound determination, she pushed through another contraction, and then another, and another. The women around her watched in awe, their whispered prayers now fervent chants, urging the child into the world.

Finally, after what felt like an eternity, a baby's cry pierced the charged air. The women erupted into relieved laughter and jubilant cheers, their

joyous voices echoing through the silent Himalayan night. The prophecy, momentarily forgotten, was revived as they looked at the child, a girl who had made her entrance into the world with a spectacular meteor shower painting the night sky. She was named Dawa, meaning ‘moon’ in Tibetan, embodying a symbol of light amidst obscurity, a guiding presence through the shadowy voyages of human tribulation.

Pema, exhausted but triumphant, cradled Dawa in her arms. Despite the hardships of her labor, she felt an overwhelming sense of peace wash over her. Looking into her daughter’s eyes, she knew their journey was just beginning. The prophecy would cast a long shadow, but in that moment, all that mattered was the tiny life in her arms, her daughter. She had fought, and she had won. And she knew she would do it again, for as long as she lived. They named her Dawa, and the news of the birth of the prophesized enlightened child spread throughout Shangri-La, infusing the village with an excited buzz that contrasted with the ordinarily serene calm.

The birth of Dawa was more than just another entry in the chronicles of village life. It fulfilled a premonition she had heard from her grandmother—a tale of a child born under a celestial alignment, destined to be a Bodhisattva. A being who, out of compassion, forgoes personal salvation to aid all sentient beings on their path to enlightenment.

Ama Tsomo, who had seen the cycles of life and death, joy and sorrow, knew that this birth was a herald of change. For her, it was a culmination of a lifetime of belief and a reaffirmation of the ancient wisdom she had safeguarded and shared. As she stood outside, her thoughts were a blend of awe and silent prayer, her heart filled with hope that this child would grow to fulfill the destiny the stars had laid out for her.

Within the warm walls, Pema cradled her daughter, her heart a mix of

joy and apprehension. By her side, Kipu looked upon his daughter with pride and wonder. “She is our little moon,” he whispered, his voice filled with awe and a deep, unspoken understanding of the destiny that lay before her.

The following day, the village buzzed with talk of the prophecy. Some embraced it wholeheartedly, while others, like Pema, grappled with doubt and uncertainty. “How can our daughter, born in such a humble home, be destined for such a path?” Kipu, however, never doubted. “She has the wisdom of ancient souls in her eyes,” he would say, his belief unwavering, his faith in the prophecy as solid as the mountains that cradled their village.

Despite the fervor, Dawa’s infancy was much like any other child’s. Her laughter was a spark that ignited joy in their humble home. As soon as Dawa could speak her first words, her curiosity was insatiable - a habit that earned her affectionate clucks of disapproval from Pema and chuckles from Kipu. Her curiosity shone brightly, much like the flames in their hearth. One of her first questions asked when she was barely three years old reflected the depth of her inquisitive nature. As the family gathered around the warmth of the fire one evening, Dawa, with wide, wonder-filled eyes, looked up at the dancing flames and asked, “Why does fire always reach up? Why doesn’t it ever grow down?”

This question, simple yet profound, caught Pema off guard. She paused, looking into the curious eyes of her daughter, and with a gentle smile, she replied, “Fire always reaches for the sky, Dawa. Just like we should always aim high in our lives.” Pema’s answer was filled with the wisdom of someone who understood the importance of nurturing such a curious mind. Dawa’s question about the fire was more than just a child’s curiosity; it was a glimpse into the depth of her thinking. Even at such a young age, she was beginning to grapple with concepts beyond the

immediate and tangible, her mind reaching out, much like the flames, towards something higher and more profound.

The next day started like any other in the life of a yak herder. Kipu and his young daughter Dawa were out in the fields, tending to their herd. The sky was clear, the air crisp with the freshness that only a winter morning in the Himalayas can offer. But in the mountains, the weather is a fickle companion, and without warning, the clear sky darkened as a fierce winter storm rolled in. Kipu, experienced and constantly vigilant, sensed the change immediately. “Dawa, we must head back,” he said, urgency lacing his voice as he scanned the horizon where dark clouds were gathering at an alarming pace. But as they prepared to leave, Dawa’s sharp eyes caught sight of something amiss. A young calf, recently born, had strayed from its mother and was now alone, vulnerable to the impending storm. “The calf!” she exclaimed, her voice tinged with worry.

Kipu hesitated, torn between his daughter’s safety and the young yak’s life. The storm was closing in rapidly, and every moment they delayed increased their peril. Then he noticed something peculiar – a soft glow emanating from the jade lotus pendant around Dawa’s neck. The charm, a simple trinket passed down from his grandmother, had always been a mere adornment, but now it shone with an otherworldly light, bathing Dawa in a gentle luminescence.

The glow seemed surreal amidst the howling winds and the growing chaos, leaving Kipu momentarily stunned. Was it a trick of the stormy light or something more mystical? The sight of it, eerie yet comforting, bolstered his resolve.

“Dawa, stay close to me,” he said, his voice firm with decision. Hand in hand, they braved the storm, guided by the strange luminescence of the

pendant. The wind howled around them, a symphony of nature's fury, but the glow around Dawa seemed to create a bubble of calm, giving Kipu the clarity and courage he needed.

They found the calf, shivering and scared, too weak to find its way back. Father and daughter coaxed and guided the calf, battling against the blizzard that seemed intent on swallowing them whole. Kipu could not shake off the feeling that the pendant around Dawa's neck was more than just a family heirloom; it felt like a talisman, protecting them, guiding them through the storm.

Finally, after what seemed like an eternity, they emerged from the tempest, and the calf reunited with its mother. They had made it back safely, but the experience left a lasting impression on Kipu. He saw the glow of the pendant was more than a curious anomaly; it was an omen.

After their harrowing return from the storm, Kipu and Dawa entered their home, their faces bearing the exhaustion and adrenaline of their ordeal. The warmth of the hearth was a welcome contrast to the icy winds they had just battled. However, the relief of safety was quickly overshadowed by the tempest of Pema's worry and anger.

Dawa's mother had spent the hours of their absence in escalating panic. Upon seeing them, her worry instantly transformed into a fury directed squarely at Kipu. "How could you?" she exclaimed, her voice shaking with a mixture of relief and anger. "You risked our daughter's life for a calf?"

Understanding her fear but feeling the weight of their accomplishment, Kipu tried to explain. "It wasn't just about the calf, Pema. It's about who we are and what we stand for. We couldn't leave the helpless creature to perish."

But Pema was not to be consoled. Her eyes, usually calm and understanding, were now pools of distress. In her eyes, their child's life far outweighed any other concern. Meanwhile, Dawa, still flush with the thrill of their rescue, spoke up, her voice a mixture of innocence and conviction. "Ama, it was me who saw the calf first. I wanted to save her. We couldn't just leave her there alone in the storm."

Her words hung in the air, a testament to the burgeoning sense of responsibility and compassion that Kipu had observed earlier. Pema looked at her daughter, her anger softening into a complex mix of pride and lingering fear. The fierce protectiveness of a mother clashed with the realization that her daughter was growing into someone who placed the welfare of others alongside her own.

As they sat by the fire that night, the pendant returned to its dormant, opaque self. Kipu looked at his daughter with new eyes. Unaware of her father's silent musings, Dawa chattered excitedly about their adventure, her face alight with the joy of having saved a life. Nestled between her parents, she fell asleep with a sense of fulfillment, her heart content with the knowledge that they had done the right thing. In her dreams, she wandered in meadows under a moonlit sky, the jade lotus pendant glowing softly around her neck, a silent guardian in her journey of compassion and courage.

As Dawa continued to grow, so did her curiosity, far beyond her years. Her questions stirred the villagers' minds, challenging old beliefs and awakening new thoughts. At the tender age of six, Dawa posed a question that lingered in the villagers' minds long after it was asked. One evening, as the village elders shared tales of past glories and ancient legends, Dawa, with a contemplative look in her eyes, inquired, "If stories of old teach us lessons, why do we keep repeating the same mistakes? Shouldn't we be creating new stories instead?"

This simple yet profound question created a stir among those who heard it. For the believers in her prophesied destiny, this query clearly indicated her inherent wisdom and a glimpse of her potential as a Bodhisattva. They marveled at her ability to perceive the cyclical nature of human behavior and her yearning for progress and change.

Conversely, others in the village found themselves unsettled by her question. It challenged the reverence they held for traditions and the past. To them, Dawa's question undermined the valuable lessons derived from their history and suggested a somewhat radical idea of abandoning old stories for new, uncharted narratives.

Time continued to pass, and one fall day, Dawa wandered to the river that ran through the village. There, a rare blue butterfly landed on her hand. Dawa observed the delicate creature with a sense of deep connection, feeling a wave of mystical understanding wash over her.

"Are you lost, little one?" she whispered to the butterfly, her voice filled with a sense of wonder and an unspoken understanding of the universe's vastness.

The butterfly fluttered its wings and flew away, leaving Dawa feeling a profound connection to the world around her.

Returning home, her eyes alight with the secret of her encounter, she announced, "I spoke to a butterfly today."

Her mother, Pema, who had been preparing the evening meal, paused to look at Dawa. The light of the hearth flickered in her eyes, reflecting a mixture of amusement and wonder. "Did the butterfly speak back, Dawa?" she asked gently, indulging her daughter's vivid imagination. Dawa nodded earnestly, her young face aglow with the magic of her

experience. “It didn’t use words, Ama, but it told me that being small doesn’t mean being insignificant. Every creature has its purpose and place in the world.”

Pema smiled, tucking a stray lock of hair behind Dawa’s ear. “That’s a wise lesson, my child. Remember, even the smallest beings can teach us great truths. Always keep your heart and ears open to the whispers of nature.”

The following day, Kipu and his daughter Dawa stand watching their herd graze in the peaceful valley. Among the yaks, there is one that catches their attention – Tashi, a young yak who behaves unlike any other in the herd.

“Tashi has always been a peculiar one,” Kipu tells Dawa, his eyes following the young yak who seems more interested in the sky than the grass under his feet. “He spends hours gazing at the birds as if lost in their world.”

Curious and intuitive, Dawa watches Tashi closely. She notices the longing in his eyes, the way he stretches his neck towards the soaring birds with a mix of fascination and yearning.

“Apa, do you think Tashi dreams of flying?” Dawa asks, her voice tinged with the same wonder she sees in Tashi’s eyes.

Kipu smiles, amused by her question but also moved by the depth of her insight. “Maybe he does, Dawa. Maybe in his heart, he’s more than just a yak.”

As they spoke, the yak Tashi did something extraordinary. He clambers onto a large boulder, his hooves clumsy on the uneven surface. He stands there momentarily, his head raised high, his eyes fixed on a group of eagles circling above.

Dawa and Kipu watch silently, holding their breath as Tashi seems to muster all his courage. With a sudden burst of energy, Tashi leaps from the rock, his body awkwardly flailing as he momentarily seems to believe he can join the birds in their flight. But gravity is unyielding, and Tashi lands heavily on the ground with a thud. Dawa's heart leaps to her mouth, fearing he's hurt. But Tashi gets up, seemingly unscathed, just a bit dazed by his failed attempt.

As they rush over to ensure he's alright, Dawa spots something unusual on Tashi's fur— a single, beautiful feather, unlike the coarse hair that usually covers the yaks. It glimmers faintly in the sunlight as if holding a fragment of Tashi's unfulfilled dream.

“Apa, look!” Dawa exclaims, touching the feather carefully. “It's as if Tashi left this behind as a reminder of his dream.” Kipu nods, his eyes soft with affection for the yak and his daughter. “Yes, Dawa. It's a reminder that sometimes our dreams may not lift us into the sky, but they always leave something beautiful behind.”

Together, they stand there; Dawa sees the feather, a symbol of hope and dreams, no matter how impossible they seem. In this moment, a bond of understanding and shared dreams strengthens between father and daughter.

However, the path of destiny is often lined with shadows. And for Dawa, that shadow came in the form of tragedy. One fateful morning, as the sun began to rise, Dawa watched her father prepare for his task. His movements were methodical, a ritual honed by years of experience as a yak herder. He gathered his herding tools, a sturdy rope, and a small bundle of medicinal herbs known in the village for their healing properties. Dawa observed her father with a mix of admiration and curiosity. She had always been fascinated by his knowledge of the animals and his ability to connect with them profoundly.

“Father, can I come with you?” Dawa’s voice was filled with eager anticipation. Her eyes shone with the prospect of adventure and learning. She had always felt a deep connection to the yaks, these gentle giants who were the lifeblood of their village.

Kipu turned to his daughter, his face etched with affection and a hint of concern. “One day soon, yes. But not today, Dawa,” he replied softly. “The birthing of a calf is a delicate matter. The mothers can become nervous and unpredictable. You should stay here with your mother.”

Dawa’s face fell, and a pout formed on her lips. She understood her father’s words, yet her heart ached to be part of the experience. She loved the yaks, with their soft eyes and gentle demeanor. More than anything, she wanted to be there, to witness the miracle of birth and be by her father’s side.

Pema, Dawa’s mother, placed a comforting hand on her shoulder. “Come, Dawa,” she said gently. “Let us prepare a warm welcome for the new calf. We can make some extra fodder and ensure everything is ready when your father returns.”

Reluctantly, Dawa agreed, her gaze lingering on her father’s retreating figure as he made his way toward the pastures. The morning air was crisp, the sky a clear blue, and the birds chirped merrily. It seemed like any other day in the life of their tiny village.

Hours passed, and Pema and Dawa busied themselves with their daily chores. Yet, as the sun climbed higher in the sky, Pema’s brow furrowed with worry. Kipu should have been back by now. The calving was not usually a prolonged affair.

“Stay here, Dawa,” Pema instructed, her voice laced with concern. “I will go and see if your father needs any help.”

But Dawa, sensing her mother’s anxiety, insisted on accompanying her. Together, they set out towards the pastures, their hearts heavy with an unspoken fear. The scenic beauty of their surroundings, usually a source of joy and wonder, now seemed distant and uninviting.

As they neared the grazing grounds, a sense of foreboding gripped them. The yaks were scattered, their usual calm demeanor replaced by a palpable tension. And then they saw him - Kipu, lying motionless on the ground, the aftermath of a tragic accident that had occurred in the blink of an eye.

The mother, yak, protective of her newborn calf and agitated by the unfamiliar situation, reacted unpredictably, catching Kipu off guard. In her state of panic, she had fatally wounded him, leaving behind a scene that shattered the peace of the idyllic morning.

Pema’s heart-wrenching scream pierced the air, a cry of despair that echoed across the valley, reaching the very edges of Shangri-La. It was a sound that would haunt Dawa for years to come, a reminder of the day her world changed forever.

The days after Kipu’s untimely death unfolded like a bleak, unending twilight. The vibrant energy that once filled their home with laughter and warmth had dissipated, leaving a haunting stillness in its wake. The rhythm of their daily life was disrupted as if the earth itself had shifted beneath their feet. Dawa, young yet wise beyond her years, grappled with a loss that was profound and multifaceted. Her father had been her anchor, the unwavering believer in her prophesied destiny. His

steadfast presence had been a constant source of encouragement and understanding. Now, with him gone, the world seemed colder, more daunting. His absence was an aching void, a silence too profound to be filled. Her grief was a palpable entity, living within her, a relentless reminder of what she had lost.

Dawa's memories of her father were a tapestry of love and learning. His gentle voice explaining the mysteries of the stars, his patient guidance as she navigated her early steps on the path of wisdom, his hearty laughter echoing in the valleys – all these were now fragments of a past that seemed both distant and painfully close. Each recollection was a bittersweet pang in her heart, a mixture of joy and unbearable loss. She clung to these memories, finding solace in the enduring love they represented. Yet, in the quiet moments, when the night seemed to press in around her, Dawa couldn't help but feel an overwhelming sense of loneliness, as if a part of her soul had been taken with her father.

Pema, on the other hand, was engulfed by a storm of sorrow and bitterness. The loss of Kipu was not just the passing of her husband; it was, in her eyes, a cruel betrayal by fate. Her grief was tinged with anger and confusion. The prophecy that had once filled her with a reluctant sense of pride now seemed like a curse. "How can she be a Bodhisattva," Pema lamented, her voice often breaking with emotion, "when such tragedy befalls us?" Her faith in the prophecy, once tentative yet hopeful, had crumbled into despair. She looked at Dawa, her daughter, the supposed harbinger of enlightenment, and felt a surge of resentment. This was not the future she had envisioned, not the destiny she had hesitantly embraced.

Pema's days were spent in mourning, her nights in restless contemplation. She grappled with the unfairness of their fate, the senselessness of her loss. The village, too, felt the ripple of their tragedy, the collective sorrow

mirroring Pema's own. Her heart, once open to the possibilities of Dawa's destiny, is now closed in upon itself, guarding against further pain.

For Dawa, her mother's pain was another burden to bear. She watched helplessly as Pema withdrew into her shell of grief, her once vibrant spirit dimmed. The transformation was stark and heartbreaking. Dawa longed to reach out, to bridge the widening chasm of sorrow and misunderstanding, but she was unsure how. Her own pain was a tangled web of loss and confusion, her once clear path now shrouded in doubt.

In the weeks following her father's passing, Dawa found herself wandering the meandering paths of Shangri-La, her heart heavy with a grief that seemed to shadow her every step. The laughter and joy that once sparkled in her eyes had dimmed, replaced by a reflective, distant gaze. The villagers, who once looked upon her with reverence and curiosity, now watched her with a blend of pity and discomfort.

Dawa's mind was a tumultuous sea of doubts as she sat by the river one afternoon, the exact spot where the blue butterfly had once landed on her hand. Was she truly the Bodhisattva her father believed her to be? His unwavering faith in her destiny had been her guiding star. With him gone, that star seemed to have fallen from the sky, leaving her in darkness.

Lost in these thoughts, she barely noticed Choden, a village youth known for his outspoken nature, approach her. "Dawa, you seem troubled," he said, sitting beside her, his voice tinged with genuine concern.

Dawa looked at him, her eyes reflecting her inner turmoil. "My father believed in my destiny as a Bodhisattva," she murmured. "But now, with him gone, I'm not sure what to believe. Am I destined for greatness, or was it just his belief?"

Choden pondered for a moment before replying. “Who cares how the stars were aligned when you were born, Dawa? What do YOU believe is to be your destiny? That is the only thing that matters!”

His words, simple yet profound, struck a chord within Dawa. She realized that her destiny was not written in the stars or foretold by wise men. It was something she had to discover and define for herself. Her father’s belief in her was not a blueprint for her life but a torch to light her way as she carved her path.

That evening, as Dawa sat under the vast Himalayan sky, she contemplated Choden’s words. The stars above seemed to twinkle with a renewed vigor as if encouraging her to find her light. She understood then that her journey was not about living up to a prophecy but about understanding who she was and wanted to be.

The realization was both liberating and daunting. Dawa knew the path ahead would be filled with challenges and choices that would shape her destiny. But now, she also knew that her fate was hers to shape. She was not just the daughter of Kipu or the child of a prophecy. She was Dawa, with a path uniquely her own to forge, a destiny uniquely her own to fulfill.

As the moon rose high, casting a serene glow over the village, Dawa felt a quiet resolve settle in her heart. The journey of self-discovery, of defining her destiny, had begun. In that moonlit silence, a new chapter in her life was waiting to be written, where she would question, learn, and ultimately choose her path.

Ancient Wisdom

The stars didn't have to align when we were born for us to be special.

Anyone can control their own destiny. What do I believe?

Being small does not mean being insignificant

Our job as leaders is to create new stories, not to repeat the same ones

Keep our eyes and ears open to nature



"The Eternal Flame marries ancient wisdom with the demands of modern leadership. Ryan and Keith's teachings provide a trove of wisdom and fresh perspectives for anyone committed to leading with purpose and vision."

- **Sam Reese, CEO, Vistage Worldwide, Inc.**

"In this harmonious symphony of ancient principles there are threads of wisdom to inform our modern life and leadership journey. This narrative on community and leadership can help shape today's leaders and tomorrow's visionaries. It's that powerful."

- **Stephanie Barton, SVP, Marketing and Communications, FCCS**

"This book is a guide that inspires and equips leaders with practical tools to navigate the complexities of our ever-evolving world. It's a refreshing and enlightening read for anyone on the leadership path who wants to help others."

- **James Goodnow, President & CEO, Fennemore**

"This book is the guide that not only inspires but equips leaders with practical tools to navigate the complexities of our ever-evolving world. The refreshing and enlightening read for anyone on the leadership path and wanting to help others."

Emily A. Redinbaugh, M.A. AD, Content Marketing, Bellevue University

"Dawa's story, with its deep dedication to uplifting others, resonates with anyone striving for meaningful impact. This book isn't just a narrative; it's a guide for leading a life filled with purpose and heart. A compelling read for anyone on a quest for personal growth and communal harmony."

- **Bennie Fowler, Super Bowl 50 Champion, Denver Broncos**

