

CHAPTER 45

Choose Your Destiny

Directions

Do not read these stories straight through! You will be asked to make choices as you read, and your selections will determine the outcome. After you make your choice, follow the directions and see what happens next!



The lucky lottery

You and your friend are walking together when you come upon a kiosk selling lottery tickets. They cost 10 rubles, and the grand prize is 1 million rubles!

You have 15 rubles, so you decide to buy one. Your friend also wants to buy a ticket but has only 5 rubles.

What do you do?

If you buy your ticket and keep your 5 rubles so that you will have some money left, go to (5)

If you tell your friend you will give him your 5 rubles so that he can purchase a ticket also, go to (2)

The prophet

You are a well-to-do businessman with a loving wife. Your life is easy and enjoyable, although you worry sometimes about the corruption you see in the society around you. Your hometown seems especially bad, but you feel there is little you can do about it.

You are at your country dacha with your family. As you are taking a nap, a "voice" wakes you. You look around but can see no one, yet you still hear the "voice." It claims to be an angel! You fear that you may be losing your mind.

What do you do?

If you tell your wife about hearing a "voice" and ask her advice, go to (9).

If you keep quiet about hearing a spiritual "voice" because you don't want other people to think you are crazy, go to (1).



If you decide to tell everyone that spirits speak to you, and that you are a special person who should be listened to, then go to (15)



The failed civil servant

You are a skilled and learned civil servant. You love reading the old classics and practicing those traditions and virtues of the past that have stood the test of time. They proved their usefulness time and time again as the proper way to solve sticky social problems.

You believe truthfulness and trustworthiness are the essential, though often neglected, virtues of good government and fruitful societal relations. The ideal of a good family is, you think, central to establishing the correct foundation for stability in the nation. The enduring benevolence of parents toward their children, and children's love and dutifulness toward their parents, are what separate humans from animals. You feel that expanding parental benevolence and filial piety into all

areas of society would create the path to stability for your country and the cornerstone for good government.

All around you are grasping civil "servants" who oppress those they should serve, while insincerely currying the favors of their superiors. Everywhere people care more about money and power than they do for each other. Your nation is falling apart from greed, loss of tradition and the failure to practice the social virtues.

What do you do?

If you continue at your government job as before, knowing that there is little one person can do, go to (21).

If you give in to the times and decide to look after your own welfare first, go to (6).

If you speak out against what is wrong in the government and try to set an example of courageous and honest practice in your own work, go to (10).



The party

You are a 16-year-old boy. Your parents and younger sister are traveling out of town to visit some friends for a week during the summer. You beg your parents to allow you to stay at home for the week and watch the flat. At first they refuse. But after discovering that your two other neighbors are also going away and will be unable to take care of your dog and water your family's plants, your parents agree to let you stay alone in the flat — under two conditions. First, you absolutely cannot have anyone over to the flat except for your best friend, Mike, whom your parents trust greatly. Second, you must be home before ten in the evening (and you know your father will call almost every night to make sure you're all right).

You argue with your parents sometimes and at times they annoy you, but you are happy that they trust you so much and you want to prove to them that you are mature. Your mother keeps the flat as clean as a museum. Your parents do not smoke and hate the smell of ciga-

rettes, and they rarely drink, although your father does have a liquor cabinet for guests.

Only one day after your family's departure, your best friend, Mike, tries to talk you into having a "small" party. All your friends know that your parents are away and that you have the whole flat to yourself. You did not want any of your friends to know, because you knew they would all want to come over. You are a little angry at Mike for telling anyone after he said he would not. But he just laughs and tells you you'll have a heart attack by the time you're 25 if you don't stop taking everything so seriously.

For the first few days you ignore the requests to have a party, but everyone is calling you to ask when it will be. You realize that if you don't invite at least some of your friends over, they will cut you out of the group and call you a goody-goody.

What do you do?

If you decide to have the party under the condition that only five people will come and that they won't drink or smoke in the flat, go to (11).

If you decide not to have the party at all, go to (20).

1 The "voice" you heard troubles you less and less. You are able to continue your life normally, but you always wonder what might have happened. The End.

2 You say to your friend, "Take my extra 5 rubles and buy a ticket for yourself. You might be lucky."

Later you find that your ticket is a loser but your friend's ticket won the million rubles!! When you see him again he says to you, "If you have change for 50, I'll pay back the 5 you gave me yesterday."

What do you do?

If you shout insults at him and walk away in a huff, go to (23).

If, to express your anger at his ingratitude, you hit him, go to (8).

If you congratulate him on his good fortune and sincerely say, "The 5 rubles were a gift. Keep it," giving your friend a friendly pat on the back, go to (13).

3 You find only a handful of young men who want to learn from you.
What do you do?

If you give up, go to (21).

If you continue to teach whomever will listen, go to (19).

4 As you try to share your message with the people of your city, you are mocked and persecuted. People call you crazy and anti-social or else doubt your sincerity.

What do you do?

If you give up trying to influence society with your message and only continue to share with those, such as your wife, who support and believe in you, go to (7).

If you continue despite ridicule and persecution, go to (16).

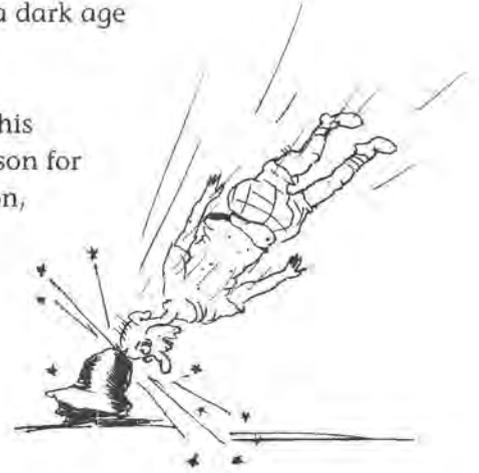
5 Your ticket loses. Your friend is upset by your stinginess in not lending him money so that he could buy a ticket as well. In the months ahead the two of you grow steadily apart. Years later you pass each other on the street without recognizing each other. The End



6 By giving in to the system, you lose your self-respect and use your knowledge, skill and position to benefit yourself. Eventually you are betrayed and exposed by jealous fellow workers. Money, position, power, and self-esteem are all lost, and you become a miserable beggar. The End.

7 Your small group is considered a silly cult gathering and is not paid much attention. After your death your few followers break up and the messages from the angelic "voice" have no influence on society. People continue to become more hedonistic, self-centered and corrupt. This eventually leads to the breakdown of civilization followed by a dark age lasting centuries. The End.

8 Your friend falls from your blow and strikes his head on a stone. He dies. You are sent to prison for manslaughter. When you are released from prison, your old acquaintances shun you as a murderer. You wander about from place to place, always feeling marked as a killer. The End.



9 Your wife calms your fears and says that she loves and trusts you. She suggests that you write your messages down so that the two of you can review them together. Go to (18).

10 Your outspokenness earns you nothing but trouble, and your practice of honest government puts your colleagues in a bad light so that they conspire against you. Eventually you are driven from the government.

What do you do?

If you decide to become a teacher and try to teach junior civil servants the way of good government and productive social relations, in the hope that it might do some good, go to (3).

If you throw up your hands in disgust with all the corruption, go to (21).

11 Nine o'clock comes and the doorbell rings. To your surprise and dismay, ten friends, including a girl from school whom you really like, are at the door. They have alcohol with them. You are standing at the door.

What do you do?

If you let them in, go to (17).

If you tell them that they cannot come in because there are too many of them and you had already said that no drinking would be allowed, go to (20).

12 Because of the rejection you experience from the people of your city and the misunderstanding of your wife and relatives, you become a recluse. Your marriage and business deteriorate and you come to live all alone with your "voices." People call you the "crazy hermit." The End.

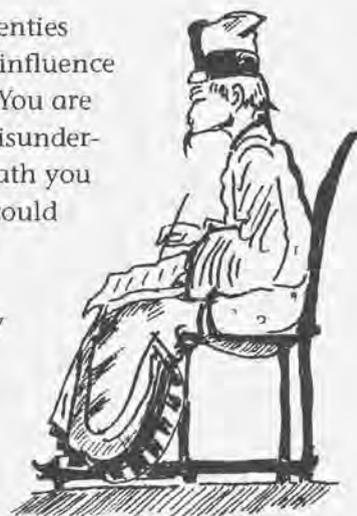


13 He is moved by your friendly and generous nature. Your friend weeps and says to you, "Half the prize money is yours. Please forgive me for being so stingy." You insist on your pleasure at his good fortune and say that he does not owe you anything but friendship. Your friend insists on sharing the winnings. The two of you become business partners investing together, and both of you become wealthy. Your greatest wealth, however, is your undying friendship. As you go through life, you continue to share together and live happy and productive lives. The End.

14 You live well into your seventies without gaining any real influence in your sadly deteriorating country. You are often disappointed with your students, who frequently misunderstand what you try to teach them. At the time of your death you believe yourself to be a failure, but you know you never could have sacrificed your principles or abandoned your path without everlasting regret.

After your death your disciples and others inspired by your example and teaching continue your work. Eventually the ruler of a new government adopts your path as the basis for a revival of society. Everyone in your country comes to be influenced by your teaching, and a rebirth of your nation takes place.

Your teaching of the right path of societal relations and responsibilities inspires your nation and the surrounding countries for 25 centuries. Your philosophy endures today. You are Master Kung, Confucius, the Great Teacher and the father of Far Eastern civilization! The End.



15 People laugh at your outbursts, and your wife and friends worry about your sanity.
What do you do?

If you continue, go to (22).

If you stop trying to share your message with these ungrateful people, go to (12).

16 Persecution continues, but you gain followers. Finally you are driven from your city as a troublemaker. You go to a new town, where finally you are well received. After some years you are able to return to your own city. There you do away with the corruption and set about reforming the society. Your message of honesty, charity, faithfulness to the will of God and honest dealing among people spreads throughout the country. After your death it continues to spread and becomes the basis for a great civilization. Because of the order and goodness your teaching brings to society, the arts, literature and science flourish.

Your civilization preserves and expands the knowledge of past neighboring societies. This comes to influence European society, which has passed through a long “dark age.” The learning and elegance of the civilization founded on the message from your “voice” are the most important catalyst in the European Renaissance and later the Scientific Revolution.

Your message is read and practiced from Africa to Indonesia and beyond by hundreds of millions of followers who call you the Prophet. Many historians consider you the most influential person in history. Your name is Muhammad, the Seal of the Prophets. The End.

17 At first you run from room to room, picking up empty beer bottles and cigarette butts, and nagging your friends to keep the music down. After about an hour you tire of being a watchdog and decide to join the fun. A few of your friends (including that pretty girl) are playing a drinking game in the kitchen. Mike asks you to join in, and so you do. After you have six or seven beers and a few cigarettes, you get up the courage up to ask that girl to dance. It turns out that she wants to do a lot more than dance. You know you really don't want to go into the bedroom with this girl. You don't know anything about her but her name. But you're really drunk by now and your friends keep urging you on.

You wake up the next afternoon alone in the flat. Looking around, you can't believe it's the same place you live in! There are beer cans and bottles and cigarette butts all over. Fortunately, you find nothing broken, and manage to clean everything up before your parents return home, so they never know. All of your friends are happy and think you're “really cool” to have had such a great party. You think it's all over until, two months later, the girl you were with tells you she is pregnant and it's definitely your doing. The End.



18 The messages from your “voice” decry the degradation of society, the hypocrisy and superstition that are the present practice of religion, and the callous, selfish and money-grabbing attitudes that permeate your city. The “voice” calls for submission to God's will and righteous dealing among people. This message seems good, noble and true to your wife and the small circle of friends with whom you have shared it.

What do you do?

If you now share your message with the people of your city, go to (4).

If you decide to keep the message to the small circle of friends who have come to believe in it, go to (7).

19 Your students remain very few in number. The very best one, the one who really understands you, dies. This leaves you distraught.



In time, however, word of your wisdom spreads as you wander about teaching the path to those who will listen. A local political leader offers you a post in his government if you will stop being so idealistic and inflexible.

What do you do?

If you compromise your principles so that you can try to influence the “system” from within, go to (6).

If you refuse the government post and continue to teach your few disciples and whomever else will listen, go to (14).

20 Your friend Mike is disgusted with you, and your other friends don't want to talk to you anymore. You feel bad, but you think you did the right thing. You knew you couldn't lie to your parents, because they trusted you. You didn't believe that your friends could have a small get-together without drinking and smoking. You're lonely for a while, but then you start to think about the way your former friends treated you and the way they treat each other. Besides, who knows what could have happened if you had let them have a party in your flat? The End.



21 Life goes on, things go from bad to worse, you grow old and embittered and die. The End.

22 Everyone continues to mock you. Your relatives and friends finally have you committed to an asylum for the mentally unbalanced. Surrounded by other madmen, you continue to rant about your “voices.” The doctors jokingly refer to you as the “prophet.” The End.

23 Your former friend uses his money well and becomes wealthy. You are consumed with resentment as you hear of his success. Your days are always hard and unlucky. You live a lonely and bitter life as you continue to curse your former friend. The End.