

The Mad Hatter's Heart Sutra

A found poem

by Dharmavadana



*The Bodhisattva of Compassion,
 When he meditated deeply,
 Saw the emptiness of all five skandhas
 And sundered the bonds that caused him suffering*

‘No room! No room!’ they cried out.

‘There’s plenty of room!’ said Alice.

*Form is no other than emptiness,
 Emptiness no other than form*

‘Have some wine,’ the March Hare said.

‘I don’t see any wine.’

‘There isn’t any.’

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The Hatter opened his eyes very wide.
 ‘Why is a raven like a writing desk?’

‘I believe I can guess that,’ said Alice.

‘Do you mean that you think
 you can find the answer to it?’
 Asked the March Hare.

‘Exactly so,’ said Alice.

‘Then you should say what you mean,’
 The March Hare went on.

‘I do. At least I mean what I say.
 That’s the same thing you know.’

‘Not the same thing a bit,’ said the Hatter.
 ‘You might just as well say that
 “I see what I eat” is the same thing as
 “I eat what I see”!’

‘I like what I get, I get what I like.’

*Consciousness itself
is the same as this*

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Alice sighed wearily.
‘I think you might do better
with the time,’ she said,
‘than waste it in asking riddles
that have no answers.’

‘If you knew Time
as well as I do,’ said the Hatter,
‘You wouldn’t talk about wasting it.
I dare say you never even spoke to Time.

‘At the great concert
Given by the Queen of Hearts
I had to sing:

“Twinkle, twinkle, little bat.
How I wonder what you’re at.
Up above the world you fly
Like a tea tray in the sky.
Twinkle, twinkle...”

*No ignorance or end of it,
Nor all that comes of ignorance.*

Here the Dormouse shook itself
And began singing in its sleep:
‘Twinkle, twinkle, twinkle, twinkle...’

‘I’d hardly finished the first verse,’
said the Hatter, ‘when the Queen bawled out:
“He’s murdering the time! Off with his head!”
And ever since that
It’s always six o’clock.’

*No withering, no death,
No end of them.*

‘It’s always tea-time.’

‘Then you keep moving round...’

‘Exactly so,’ said the Hatter,
‘...As the things get used up.’

‘But what happens
when you come to the beginning again?’

‘Suppose we change the subject.’

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‘Wake up, Dormouse! Tell us a story.’

‘Once upon a time
There were three little sisters
And they lived at the bottom of a well.’

‘But why?’

‘Take some more tea.’

‘I’ve had nothing yet,’
Alice replied in an offended tone.
‘So I can’t take more.’

‘You mean you can’t take *less*,’
Said the Hatter.

‘It’s very easy to take *more* than nothing.’

Attainment too is emptiness.

‘They were learning to draw,’
the Dormouse went on,
yawning and rubbing its eyes,
‘and they drew all manner of things –
everything that begins with an M—’

‘Why with an M?’ said Alice.

‘Why not?’ said the March Hare.

‘—that begins with an M,

such as mouse-traps, and the moon,
 and memory, and muchness—
 you know you say things are
 “much of a muchness”—
 did you ever see such a thing
 as a drawing of a muchness?’

‘Really, now you ask me,’ said Alice,
 very much confused, ‘I don't think—’

‘Then you shouldn't talk,’ said the Hatter.

The Bodhisattva
Holding to nothing whatever
Reaches clearest Nirvana.

‘I want a clean cup,’ interrupted the Hatter.
 ‘Let's all move one place on.’

The Dormouse said:
 ‘It was a treacle-well.’

‘There's no such thing.’

‘Sh!’

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‘Have you guessed the riddle yet?’

‘No, What's the answer?’

‘I haven't the slightest idea.’

All things
are by nature void

‘The Dormouse is asleep again.’

Nor is there consciousness
Or what the mind takes hold of,
Nor even act of sensing.

Not even wisdom to attain

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The last time she saw them,
They were trying to put the Dormouse
Into the teapot.

'I'll never go *there* again!' said Alice
as she picked her way through the wood.
'It's the stupidest tea-party
I ever was at in all my life!'

Just as she said this, she noticed
that one of the trees had a door
leading right into it.
'That's very curious!' she thought.
'But everything's curious today.'

*All Buddhas of past and present,
Buddhas of future time,
Using this Prajna wisdom
Come to full and perfect vision*

'I think I may as well go in at once.'
And in she went.

Gate Gate Paragate Parasamgate Bodhi Svaha

