

Rex

By Judy Saltzman

One cold winter day an ordinary green garden lizard about six inches long wandered into our Shaolin Kempo martial arts studio. He was happy to perch on a leaf in one of the flowerpots. He also liked our warm carpet. He would walk right out on the carpet to greet students—head erect and chest out. He was unafraid, although we were giants to him. The Master said it was good luck to have a “dragon” come to stay with us. He liked the little lizard, and named him Rex. The Master did not want to keep him a prisoner. He offered Rex his freedom by opening the door wide. But Rex wanted to stay. The Master called a pet store and got special food for Rex—a type of worm his species liked to eat. Rex was our new mascot.

When I came into the studio, Rex came out on the carpet to greet me. He wanted to be accepted. I got down on the floor eye level with Rex and said, “Do you want to be a Shaolin? Do you want to practice with us?” He shook his head up and down vigorously. He would watch us from behind the Chinese screen near the edge of the carpet, or sometimes from behind the punching bag near the wall. Rex was never kept in a jar or glass cage, because the master wanted him to have complete freedom.

The children who came to the school had strict orders not to handle or tease Rex. They had also been told not to hit the punching bag when it was near the wall, for fear of damaging the wall. Unfortunately, Rex was watching us practice from behind a punching bag one day when, against the Master’s orders, a boy decided to hit it. Poor Rex was crushed against the wall by the large bag, and mortally wounded. The boy cried when he realized what he had done.

Rex took about twenty-four hours to die. The master helped him by putting him on a warm cloth. He rubbed his back, and Rex wagged his tail. The little lizard was happy until the very end. He wanted to be with beings on a higher plane of evolution. His body came from a much earlier period of evolutionary development; yet, he desired our company by a claim of co-nature—the Buddha that is all of us. Yes, the tiny green, courageous, little lizard had Buddha Nature, as does all life.