

NIRVANA

by Helen Nicell



And so the retired Buddhas eventually reached their final destination, Nirvana. After years of meditation and finding the higher plain, over 60 Buddhas had been selected from all over the country. They received letters in jasmine-scented envelopes, inviting them to travel to the valley on Sunday. Zen Executive coaches would be picking them up. They would need no possessions, all food and drink would be provided.

However, things were not quite how some had expected. When they entered the Peace

Garden Akari whispered to Disha, "All these years of meditation, searching for enlightenment, I didn't imagine Nirvana to look like this."

"I know" said Disha "It's not what I expected either. I don't understand the angels, animals, children and toys all gathered here."

With the mountains surrounding them, the cacophony echoed like a spoon around a bowl. It jarred their senses. They had lived for many years in the peaceful temple, this was like a bustling market place. Ducks were clucking, children played and the angels were singing. Buddhas of all shapes and sizes danced and to the rhythmical music and the softly beating drum. The mountains frowned and the sky grew dark.

"Well," said Disha "I suppose this is Nirvana to many, even if it is not what we thought it would be." He held his hands in the praying position and the two Buddhas nodded serenely to one another.

Another coach arrived; gargoyles, dogs, rabbits and a mermaid joined the throng. Food smells mixed in with the sulphur vapour filling the air. The atmosphere felt like a carnival.

A boy with puffed up cheeks and wearing a baseball cap turned backwards, started shouting, "Look, look". He pointed to the mountain. Silence fell and the gathered revellers looked upwards. A red glow lit the night sky, but this was not a sunset. Slowly the lava crept down towards them, nobody moved. The Buddhas all smiled, this was Nirvana coming to collect them.

Viraj shivered as he unlocked the gates to the garden centre. He looked away from the garden statues "It's the Buddhas" he told his wife, "They are creepy, I always feel as though I have walked into a party, their eyes follow me wherever I go."