

# *A Step Away from Paradise*

## EXCERPT No. 3

### The Prince of Shambhala

From Chapter 8, The Return

When the time came to open the way to the Hidden Land in Sikkim, Tulshuk Lingpa and his family were living in the western Himalayas over a thousand miles away. Tulshuk Lingpa went to Sikkim with a few of his closest disciples, leaving his wife, his son Kunsang, and his daughters to follow about a month later.

As the time drew near for the family to leave for Sikkim, Kunsang became melancholic and, he admitted to me, quite sad to say good-bye to everybody who was staying behind and to everything he had ever known.

“I had never been away from home before,” he explained. “Sikkim was on the other side of India and Shambhala very much further. I knew we’d never return. I was excited, but I was also afraid.

“Then people told me, ‘You have nothing to worry about. One hundred percent! You’re father is going to be king of Shambhala, and you’re going to be prince!’

“Then I was very happy, me, *Prince of Shambhala!*”

When Kunsang told me this story, he howled with laughter, “Me, Prince of Shambhala—*Prince of Shambhala!!*”

Kunsang’s attitude towards his father and his going to the Hidden Land was deeply reverential, that of an absolute believer in both his father’s spiritual accomplishments and in the reality of Beyul. Yet when a point of absurdity about some detail of the story, or even of the entire enterprise itself, occurred to him, he never shied from expressing it. His was a knife-edge understanding, expressing the reality of Beyul as an unquestionable truth in one breath, and punching holes of absurdity spiced with tremendous humor into it with the next. Behind his

irreverence was always a deep feeling for the truth that can be contained by neither facts nor logic and can be found only in contradiction. Such was his father's legacy.

He proudly said on many occasions, "My father, he was the *crazzzziest* lama who ever lived." I often had the feeling his father taught him not only *dharma*, but also his own particular brand of craziness, and through him, more than through any other source, I had a window into Tulshuk Lingpa's character.

When Tulshuk Lingpa arrived back in Sikkim, he lived at Tashiding and made it his base. With his followers from Shrimoling and Kullu following and setting up camp on the hillsides next to the monastery, there was little hiding his true mission. People from Sikkim, Darjeeling, and Bhutan heard the news and started moving to Tashiding, swelling the original population of perhaps seventy-five in the monastery and the houses surrounding it to over four hundred people. Many of the lamas at Tashiding who are there to this day moved there because they wanted to be there when the prophesied *terton* came to open Beyul. Others moved there when they heard Tulshuk Lingpa had arrived.

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In 2005, I went with Kunsang and his son Wangchuk to Tashiding. Kunsang hadn't been in Tashiding in forty-three years. I had been to Tashiding on my own and with Wangchuk the year before. Having seen how reverentially the lamas of Tashiding treated Wangchuk when they heard he was Tulshuk Lingpa's grandson, I knew it would be a great occasion for them when Kunsang, Tulshuk Lingpa's spiritual heir, arrived—unannounced.

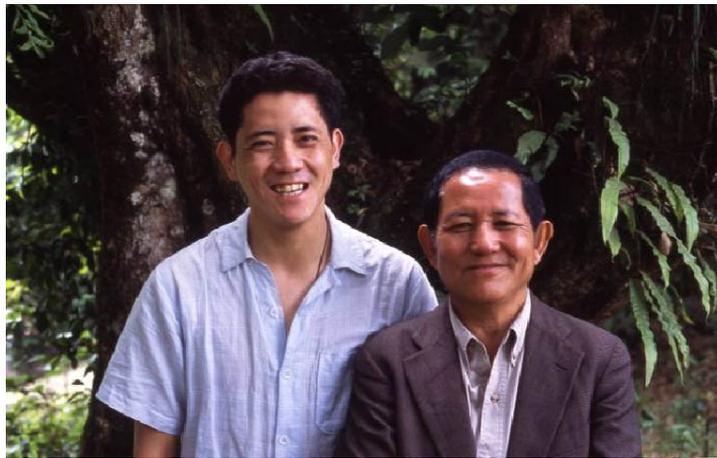
"Just think," I said to Kunsang as we sat resting on a rock on the side of the steep path to the monastery. "The Prince of Shambhala is coming, and they don't even know! How can this be? This just isn't right."

So I stood up and motioned Kunsang to proceed up to the monastery first, then Wangchuk, and I took up the rear. Making my hands into a pretend trumpet, I puffed out my cheeks and made the sound of a fanfare by pressing air through my lips.

"Bumb-be-de bummm, be-de-dummm! The Prince of Shambhala is arriving! Bumb-be-de-bummm!"

"The Prince of Shambhala," I announced, making a flourish to Kunsang. "The Crown Prince," I continued, motioning to Wangchuk. Then I pointed my finger to myself, "And their scribe!"

And that is how we arrived at Tashiding, like three raving lunatics, hysterical with laughter, “Bumb-be-de-bummmm! The Prince of Shambhala, the Crown Prince, and their scribe are arriving!”



Wangchuk & Kunsang ~ Sikkim, 2005