An Unaccepted Gift - An Already Here Adventure

A choose-your-own-adventure practice book

An original temple welcome, complete practices, and choices you can follow on paper.

Begin at The temple garden on page 2.

Scenes are shuffled. Follow the page numbers at the end of each scene. You can stop or change direction whenever you choose.

The temple garden

An original fictional welcome

You step through a small gate into a well-kept garden. Beyond it stands a small but beautiful Theravada Buddhist temple. Inside, one man sits in meditation. His face resembles Siddhartha as you have seen him imagined in art. Incense is burning. Three meditation pads lie before him.

You may sit or move on. If you sit, he opens his eyes, smiles, and greets you: “Welcome. The path is wide. You may begin with your own ordinary experience, and see what it reveals.”

Your adventure

An Unaccepted Gift. A visitor brings angry words. A question about hospitality opens another response.

“Try each invitation gently. You can question it, change direction, rest, or leave. Keep what helps and let the rest go. Ancient wisdom is an invitation to investigate, not a promise of an experience.”

Reading this book

Start using either choice below. After that, follow the page numbers rather than reading straight through. Scenes are deliberately shuffled; one scene may run over several pages. Choices appear at its end. In a PDF reader you can also click them. Keep a finger or bookmark at your current page when you pause. Two optional meetings with the man lead back to the exact scene you left.

Story and practice

The source story follows its recorded direction. Modern practice pauses and the temple framing are editorial additions, not episodes from the original story.

Detailed adaptation notes and gaps are available at the back of the book, so the telling can unfold without stopping for every editorial explanation.

Sources and wisdom

The unaccepted gift

Choose what comes next

Sit, listen, and begin - turn to page 33.

Move on and enter the adventure - turn to page 33.

Optional: read how this telling was made - turn to page 34.

What is not received

The Buddha explains that he has not accepted the insults by answering in kind. Bharadvaja's words do not have to become a shared meal. If one person berates and the other berates back, both are now taking part in the same exchange. Each finds fresh fuel in the other's reply.

This does not make the original words harmless, nor does it turn the visitor's anger into the other person's responsibility. It reveals a choice that anger tends to hide: the exchange can stop growing at this edge. Bharadvaja has arrived prepared for a contest. He finds himself instead considering a dish that is still in his own hands.

Notice, without grading

Read at your own pace. The next two pauses are contemporary invitations, not recorded events in the source.

Sources and wisdom

The unaccepted gift

Choose what comes next

Continue to a contemporary practice pause - turn to page 20.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 13.

Practice pause · Knowing this position

The angry visitor has a history, but you do not have to invent it to recognize a human being. This modern pause makes room for care without asking you to welcome mistreatment.

The telling remains open while you try another small invitation. This editorial addition does not ask you to decide what the characters should have felt. Let one ordinary experience of your own receive a little attention.

Practice pause

Knowing this position

1. Notice

Notice whether you are sitting, standing, walking, or lying down.

2. Distinguish

How do you know? Notice contact and position without adjusting them.

3. Watch

Stay with that ordinary knowledge briefly.

4. Release

Continue your activity; there is nothing to retain.

5. Return

Let the exploration end. Notice your surroundings and the support beneath you. Resume ordinary activity when you feel ready.

6. Make It Yours

If this works for you, make it part of your practice. If it does not, let it go.

Notice, without grading

What, if anything, was useful in this pause? The source’s reported result is not a result the app can establish.

Sources and wisdom

Establishing mindfulness

The unaccepted gift

Choose what comes next

Continue the story - turn to page 14.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 13.

Practice pause · Unpleasant, and the response

Someone who masters themselves achieves a greater victory than someone who defeats a million people in battle.

An unanswered offer can remain unanswered. Try this pause as a chance to hear a sentence without immediately completing it with your own.

Before the telling moves on, there is another way to approach this moment. As an editorial addition, the exercise belongs to your present life. You can adapt it or let it pass without changing anyone's part in the old story.

Practice pause

Unpleasant, and the response

1. Notice

If a harmless itch or small irritation is already present, notice it briefly. Never create discomfort.

2. Distinguish

Notice the unpleasant quality and any demand that it end.

3. Watch

Are these distinguishable? Adjust or scratch whenever you wish; do not endure pain.

4. Release

Take care of your comfort and finish the experiment.

5. Return

Let the exploration end. Notice your surroundings and the support beneath you. Resume ordinary activity when you feel ready.

6. Make It Yours

If this works for you, make it part of your practice. If it does not, let it go.

Notice, without grading

What, if anything, was useful in this pause? The source’s reported result is not a result the app can establish.

Sources and wisdom

The arrow

The unaccepted gift

Choose what comes next

Continue the story - turn to page 4.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 13.

Carry only what helps

An optional meeting - original fiction

You find the man beside the temple garden. He makes room for you to sit. This meeting is a pause in the adventure, not a required practice.

The man speaks

“Leaving a gift unaccepted is a story image. In ordinary life you may also need a boundary, support, or a departure. Calm does not require staying available for mistreatment.”

He smiles. “When you are ready, return to where you left the story.”

Sources and wisdom

The unaccepted gift

Choose what comes next

Return to “Practice pause · A place to sit” - turn to page 32.

The garden does not hurry

An optional meeting - original fiction

You find the man beside the temple garden. He makes room for you to sit. This meeting is a pause in the adventure, not a required practice.

The man speaks

“Another person’s hostility does not have to become your next act of hostility. There may be room to decline the exchange while still seeing what needs protection.”

He smiles. “When you are ready, return to where you left the story.”

Sources and wisdom

The unaccepted gift

Choose what comes next

Return to “An angry visitor” - turn to page 33.

Practice pause · Pause the next sentence

Declining an exchange can include a plain boundary or leaving. Bring the story back to a situation small enough to explore without rehearsing danger.

The turn in the story need not become a demand on you. This editorial addition offers another modest experiment. Something useful may appear; nothing in the characters' lives depends on whether it does.

Practice pause

Pause the next sentence

1. Notice

Choose a minor repetitive argument, not an urgent problem. This is an experiment with your thinking; no bodily response is required.

2. Distinguish

Notice the next example, rebuttal, or sentence you are about to add. Name its job: defending, predicting, blaming, or something else.

3. Watch

For a few seconds, leave that contribution unfinished and notice one ordinary sound or visible object. Does the argument keep going, pause, or return? “Still arguing” is an honest observation.

4. Release

Return to something ordinary. If the thought continues, do not wrestle with it.

5. Return

Let the exploration end. Notice your surroundings and the support beneath you. Resume ordinary activity when you feel ready.

6. Make It Yours

If this works for you, make it part of your practice. If it does not, let it go.

Notice, without grading

What, if anything, was useful in this pause? The source’s reported result is not a result the app can establish.

Sources and wisdom

Relaxation of thoughts

The unaccepted gift

Two sorts of thinking

Choose what comes next

Continue the story - turn to page 17.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 13.

You can leave the story here

Reading, resting, and living the rest of your day are also available. There is no obligation to finish this retelling or return to it.

The man makes no attempt to draw you back into the telling. A story can wait while a person meets the needs of a real day. Leave its characters where they are for now. If you return, the page can be opened without an apology for the time spent elsewhere.

Notice, without grading

Your previous place remains available in your account when signed in, or in this browser for guests when storage works.

An ordinary pause

You may close the book, explore ordinary life, and return to this page whenever you choose. Leaving can be part of walking the path.

Leaving the path

The man in the temple offers a quiet farewell. You can return to ordinary life now, or return to your bookmarked page another day. This pause is not a completed journey.

Sources and wisdom

The unaccepted gift

Choose what comes next

Visit the temple again - turn to page 2.

A question about guests

Bharadvaja agrees that friends and relatives sometimes come to his house. Yes, he offers them food. Yes, there are occasions when an offered dish is not accepted. The Buddha stays with that small, familiar event. If the guest does not take the food, whose food is it?

It remains the host's, Bharadvaja answers. There is no elaborate puzzle in this. A dish has been offered; it has not changed hands. The answer comes easily because it belongs to ordinary life. Only then does the Buddha bring their attention back to what has just happened between them. Angry words, too, have been offered. An offer does not oblige the other person to join the exchange.

Notice, without grading

Read at your own pace. The next two pauses are contemporary invitations, not recorded events in the source.

Sources and wisdom

The unaccepted gift

Choose what comes next

Continue to a contemporary practice pause - turn to page 18.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 13.

Practice pause · Wishing well

The distinction in the encounter is between responding and retaliating. Let an ordinary bodily detail give you time to hear the difference in a possible reply.

The next part can wait while the lesson meets an ordinary choice. This editorial addition stays close to a real, manageable situation rather than asking you to reproduce the events or achievements in the telling.

Practice pause

Wishing well

1. Notice

Think of someone easy to like.

2. Distinguish

Offer a simple wish for their safety and well-being.

3. Watch

Notice the response. Later, if comfortable, include someone you feel neutral about.

4. Release

Let the wish rest. You need not start with a difficult relationship.

5. Return

Let the exploration end. Notice your surroundings and the support beneath you. Resume ordinary activity when you feel ready.

6. Make It Yours

If this works for you, make it part of your practice. If it does not, let it go.

Notice, without grading

What, if anything, was useful in this pause? The source’s reported result is not a result the app can establish.

Sources and wisdom

Cultivating care and steadiness

The unaccepted gift

Choose what comes next

Continue to the next practice pause - turn to page 25.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 13.

Not sharing the exchange

One day lived with firm effort is better than a hundred years of laziness and weakness.

Bharadvaja presses the matter. He has heard that this teacher is free of anger; is this answer itself another kind of anger? The Buddha distinguishes a steady response from retaliation. Meeting someone else's flare with another flare makes the encounter harder for both people. Recognizing the agitation and declining to add more can serve both.

The lesson is not a clever way to humiliate the visitor. If the question about hospitality were only a polished insult, the old contest would still be going on. Its force lies in offering another possibility: a person can understand what is being thrown at them without throwing it back. The visitor is still being addressed as someone capable of understanding.

Notice, without grading

Read at your own pace. The next two pauses are contemporary invitations, not recorded events in the source.

Sources and wisdom

The unaccepted gift

Choose what comes next

Continue to a contemporary practice pause - turn to page 15.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 13.

Practice pause · The first lean

Keep the image of a dish offered at a doorway. Before considering what to accept, notice the movement toward reaching, defending, or explaining that can begin so quickly.

The man leaves the story's image with you rather than explaining it again. This editorial addition is a chance to meet an everyday version of the question. A small, safe example will do.

Practice pause

The first lean

1. Notice

Notice an ordinary sound, contact, or sight.

2. Distinguish

Is its quality pleasant, unpleasant, or neither? Unclear is an acceptable answer.

3. Watch

Does wanting more or less follow? Is that the same as the original quality?

4. Release

Let the moment continue without completing an analysis.

5. Return

Let the exploration end. Notice your surroundings and the support beneath you. Resume ordinary activity when you feel ready.

6. Make It Yours

If this works for you, make it part of your practice. If it does not, let it go.

Notice, without grading

What, if anything, was useful in this pause? The source's reported result is not a result the app can establish.

Sources and wisdom

Establishing mindfulness

The unaccepted gift

Choose what comes next

Continue to the next practice pause - turn to page 7.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 13.

Practice pause · Recognize a thought

A quarrel grows through participation. Here is a modern opportunity to recognize a reaction while it is still a reaction, before it becomes the next act in the exchange.

Here the man allows a longer silence. This editorial addition can be tried without producing the lesson's supposed correct feeling. Notice what the invitation actually does, and stop if ordinary care asks for something else.

Practice pause

Recognize a thought

1. Notice

Sit comfortably and notice a thought when you become aware of one.

2. Distinguish

Is it a plan, a wish, an objection, or another kind of thinking?

3. Watch

Can you notice the thinking as well as its subject? There is no need to find a separate observer.

4. Release

Let attention return to the room. Nothing must be silenced.

5. Return

Let the exploration end. Notice your surroundings and the support beneath you. Resume ordinary activity when you feel ready.

6. Make It Yours

If this works for you, make it part of your practice. If it does not, let it go.

Notice, without grading

What, if anything, was useful in this pause? The source's reported result is not a result the app can establish.

Sources and wisdom

The unaccepted gift

Two sorts of thinking

Choose what comes next

Continue to the next practice pause - turn to page 11.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 13.

Practice pause · Before the reply

The later training belongs to Bharadvaja's story. Your next ordinary action can be much smaller: something honest, kind, or clear that does not need an audience.

The story is nearing its ending, but your day has its own pace. This editorial addition asks whether anything small can travel with you into that day. It need not resemble the result reported in the account.

A modern practice pause

Before the reply

Before you begin

Choose a safe, ordinary situation. You may pause or finish at any time.

Take care

No message needs to be sent. Keep boundaries and necessary protective action.

1. Invitation 1

Use a low-stakes message, real or imagined. Keep your hands comfortably supported. Leave urgent or unsafe situations to practical care.

2. Invitation 2

Before replying, ask whether the words are truthful and whether sending them is likely to harm you, the other person, or both. Bodily tension is information, not the answer to that question.

3. Invitation 3

Draft one accurate sentence without an accusation about a motive you cannot know. If it would cause avoidable harm, revise it or choose not to send it.

4. Invitation 4

If you speak or send, remain attentive to the effects. Stop or correct course when harm becomes apparent. You can also leave the draft unsent.

After the practice

What did you choose, and what still needs checking?

Notice, without grading

What, if anything, was useful in this pause? The source's reported result is not a result the app can establish.

Sources and wisdom

Analysis of the path

Reflection on action

The unaccepted gift

Choose what comes next

Continue to the next practice pause - turn to page 29.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 13.

An ending beyond this pause

The account gives Bharadvaja more than a defeated argument. He recognizes a different direction for his life and asks to enter the training. That request is a beginning. The story then describes sustained, solitary practice and finally liberation; the change is not reduced to winning one conversation.

Let the episode close with the offered dish still visible in your mind. What matters is not making every angry person grateful, or remaining in every difficult encounter. It is recognizing when an exchange is recruiting you, and whether a response can avoid adding harm. The modern pauses in this adventure let you consider that small opening. They do not recreate Bharadvaja's later training or establish its result.

Notice, without grading

Read at your own pace. The next two pauses are contemporary invitations, not recorded events in the source.

Sources and wisdom

The unaccepted gift

Choose what comes next

Continue to a contemporary practice pause - turn to page 22.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 13.

Practice pause · Firm words, ordinary breath

The visitor is more than the worst sentence he brought. Try making room for that possibility while retaining your right to protect yourself.

The man has not asked for a report. This editorial addition lets you listen to the effects of a practice privately. Keep what is usable, and leave what has become unnecessary work.

Practice pause

Firm words, ordinary breath

1. Notice

Rest your hands and identify the specific behavior that needs to change. Let your breathing stay natural.

2. Invite

Rehearse one plain sentence: “Please let me finish,” or “I will continue this conversation when we can speak without insults.”

3. Listen

Say it at a comfortable volume, or use your usual communication method. Leave a short pause afterward. Notice pace, breath, and any urge to retract the boundary. Firmness can coexist with shaking, tension, or anger; you do not need perfect composure.

4. Respond

Follow through on a safe, realistic action you control. If you caused harm, name it and offer repair without blaming the feeling for your behavior.

5. Return

Let the exploration end. Notice your surroundings and the support beneath you. Resume ordinary activity when you feel ready.

6. Make It Yours

If this works for you, make it part of your practice. If it does not, let it go.

Notice, without grading

What, if anything, was useful in this pause? The source’s reported result is not a result the app can establish.

Sources and wisdom

Analysis of the path

Reflection on action

The unaccepted gift

Choose what comes next

Continue the story - turn to page 24.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 13.

Let the story rest

The retelling and its modern practice pauses can end here. You can read the full wisdom reference, return to ordinary activity, or explore another adventure.

The man closes the telling without turning its reported ending into a result you are expected to claim. The people in the old account have their own training and consequences. What you can carry is a question or an intention that meets your own ordinary life with a little more care.

Notice, without grading

Participation in these pauses does not establish the attainments described in the source.

Back at the temple

You return through the well-kept garden to the small temple. Incense drifts past the three meditation pads. The man opens his eyes, smiles, and welcomes you back.

The man speaks

You read about an angry visitor and a gift that was not accepted. You can consider what to receive without returning hostility or neglecting a boundary.

“You are welcome to walk another adventure, or return to ordinary life. There is nothing you need to prove before you go.”

An ending

To return to ordinary life, close the book here. Finishing marks participation, not an attainment.

Sources and wisdom

The unaccepted gift

Choose what comes next

Sit in the temple and begin a fresh visit - turn to page 2.

Practice pause · After the choice

One day spent seeing how things begin and end is better than a hundred years without seeing this.

Set down the wish to finish a person or a conflict in one sitting. This final modern pause lets the lesson accompany your day without turning it into a demand.

For this last editorial addition, the man leaves room to finish. You can set down the exercise along with the book. An unfinished question may remain useful without being carried as an obligation.

A modern practice pause

After the choice

Before you begin

Choose a safe, ordinary situation. You may pause or finish at any time.

Take care

Repair does not require renewed contact with an unsafe person.

1. Invitation 1

Feel your support and recall one actual action from this adventure. If you only rehearsed it, keep that distinction clear.

2. Invitation 2

What effects did you observe on yourself and others? Separate observations from predictions, hopes, and bodily impressions.

3. Invitation 3

If you caused harm, acknowledge the specific action and consider a safe correction or repair. Ask a trusted person for guidance when needed; do not demand forgiveness.

4. Invitation 4

If the action was helpful, identify the conditions that made it easier and one way to repeat them. If the effects are unknown, leave them unknown and check later if appropriate.

5. Invitation 5

Set down the review. Return to an ordinary responsibility or rest; you do not need a verdict about your whole character.

After the practice

What will you keep, change, or check next time?

Notice, without grading

What, if anything, was useful in this pause? The source’s reported result is not a result the app can establish.

Sources and wisdom

Recognizing the direction

Reflection on action

The unaccepted gift

Choose what comes next

Continue the story - turn to page 27.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 13.

Practice pause · A place to sit

Before answering the visitor, notice what it is like to arrive at a conversation already carrying a reply. Let the historical encounter wait while you meet one ordinary place of support in your own life.

The man pauses before the next part of the telling. You can try this editorial addition in the room where you are, without imagining yourself inside the historical event. There is time to notice what the beginning has stirred.

Practice pause

A place to sit

1. Notice

Sit in a position that feels comfortable. Notice where your body meets the seat.

2. Invite

Notice two points of contact: perhaps a hip and a thigh, or your back and the chair. Compare pressure or texture. Use another supported position if sitting is unavailable.

3. Listen

Make one small comfortable adjustment, or remain still and shift attention between those points. What changed in the contact, and what stayed the same? No posture needs to be achieved.

4. Respond

Let your attention move outward while the support remains beneath you.

5. Return

Let the exploration end. Notice your surroundings and the support beneath you. Resume ordinary activity when you feel ready.

6. Make It Yours

If this works for you, make it part of your practice. If it does not, let it go.

Notice, without grading

What, if anything, was useful in this pause? The source's reported result is not a result the app can establish.

Sources and wisdom

Establishing mindfulness

The unaccepted gift

Choose what comes next

Continue to the next practice pause - turn to page 5.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 13.

Optional: visit the man in the temple - carry only what helps - turn to page 9.

An angry visitor

Let us live happily, without hating those who hate us.

In the Bamboo Grove near Rajagaha, a visitor arrives carrying a grievance. His name is Akkosaka Bharadvaja. Someone from his own clan has left the household life to train with the Buddha, and Bharadvaja is angry about it. He has not come to ask a careful question. He comes with accusations ready, and lets them fly at the person before him.

The reply he seems to expect never arrives. The Buddha does not take up a matching insult. Instead, he asks about something Bharadvaja knows well: a house receiving guests. The conversation turns toward an ordinary doorway, a meal prepared, people arriving to be welcomed. For a moment, the visitor has something to answer other than his own anger.

Notice, without grading

Read at your own pace. The next two pauses are contemporary invitations, not recorded events in the source.

Sources and wisdom

The unaccepted gift

Choose what comes next

Continue to a contemporary practice pause - turn to page 31.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 13.

Optional: visit the man in the temple - the garden does not hurry - turn to page 10.

How this telling was made

Original telling and modern practice

The temple man, present-day settings, connective descriptions, and reader choices are original literary framing. Historical stories retain their recorded direction. Dialogue is modern paraphrase, not a claimed historical quotation. Practice pauses are modern invitations; reading an outcome does not establish that outcome in the reader.

About the adaptation

An original short retelling of the cited discourse episode. Historical narrative is distinguished from contemporary practice invitations; no invented choices change the recorded events.

Story, practice, and the full source

This retelling follows the insult, hospitality comparison, response, and reported later training. The bodily pauses and boundary practice are modern additions. Non-retaliation does not require remaining in danger, and this story does not promise another person will change.

A place to sit

supporting. A place to sit: Attending to ordinary physical experience can prepare bodily mindfulness. This modern sensory comparison omits the full mindfulness framework and does not establish insight.

Knowing this position

adaptation. Knowing this position: This invitation adapts an operation from the cited discourse: knowing the body. This modern sensory comparison omits the full mindfulness framework and does not establish insight.

The first lean

adaptation. The first lean: This invitation adapts an operation from the cited discourse: recognizing feeling and response. Acceptance, soothing, or reduced distress alone does not establish source-based steadiness of mind or require accepting harm.

Unpleasant, and the response

adaptation. Unpleasant, and the response: This invitation adapts an operation from the cited discourse: recognizing feeling and response. Acceptance, soothing, or reduced distress alone does not establish source-based steadiness of mind or require accepting harm.

Recognize a thought

adaptation. Recognize a thought: This invitation adapts an operation from the cited discourse: recognizing and not feeding unhelpful thought. Regulation or preference alone does not establish ethical skillfulness; all four efforts and consequences need consideration.

Pause the next sentence

adaptation. Pause the next sentence: This invitation adapts an operation from the cited discourse: recognizing and not feeding unhelpful thought. Regulation or preference alone does not establish ethical skillfulness; all four efforts and consequences need consideration.

Wishing well

adaptation. Wishing well: This invitation adapts an operation from the cited discourse: cultivating care. Modern imagery, permission, and interpersonal techniques are adaptations; the full cultivation is not covered.

Firm words, ordinary breath

supporting. Firm words, ordinary breath: Pausing and considering a response can support truthful, non-harming speech. Assertiveness or bodily confidence alone does not fulfill right speech; assess truthfulness, harm, and effects.

Before the reply

adaptation. Before the reply: New practice addressing: Conduct in daily life. Original contemporary script. It introduces part of the cited training and requires real-world repetition; no attainment is inferred.

After the choice

adaptation. After the choice: New practice addressing: Conduct in daily life. Original contemporary script. It introduces part of the cited training and requires real-world repetition; no attainment is inferred.

Sources and wisdom

Analysis of the path

Cultivating care and steadiness

Establishing mindfulness

Recognizing the direction

Reflection on action

Relaxation of thoughts

The arrow

The unaccepted gift

Two sorts of thinking

Choose what comes next

Return to the temple garden - turn to page 2.