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THE EPOCH TIMES

ARTS & TRADITION

THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

“Self-Portrait Etching at a Window,” 1648, Rembrandt van Rijn. Etching, drypoint, and burin; fourth state of nine. Sheet: 6 7/16 inches (16.3 cm). The Sylmaris Collection, gift of George Coe Graves, 1920.

Rembrandt’s Prints

Take You Inside His Creative Genius... 4

ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF LIONSGATE

(Above) Keanu Reeves as John Wick, fighting off assassins in "John Wick: Chapter 3–Parabellum." (Below) Keanu Reeves and Halle Berry, who makes a cameo appearance, in "John Wick: Chapter 3–Parabellum."

FILM REVIEW

A Cavalcade of Corniness *and* Hyper-Violence

IAN KANE

Choreography, that's what it all comes down to. Choreography. At least when we are dealing with action films that don't have much to offer in the way of storylines.

The first "John Wick" film had a semblance of a storyline. The killing–nay–the cold-blooded murder of the puppy of the titular character (Keanu Reeves) by a ruthless thug is what initially triggered (pun intended) the hero. That act alone compelled him to carve a bloody swath through the many minions of an organization of assassins called the High Table.

The second movie focused even more on action and less on any character development or interesting or original narrative. Our main man violated the rules of the Continental Hotel in New York City, which is reminiscent of a snobby private club, only for those who like to kill other people (for money, of course). The Continental functions as a safe haven for merciless mercenaries and is supposedly off limits in terms of any kind of blood spilling.

Basically, this wafer-thin plot functioned as a showcase for Wick to travel from one exotic location to the next in order to kill multitudes of extras.

In snuffing out a higher-up among the High Table hierarchy, Wick had his membership revoked, and he was branded with the ominous classification of "Ex Communicado." This designation meant that he had lost the protection afforded by the mysterious, global society of killers.

To be fair, great writing, fascinating characters, and storylines aren't why 'John Wick' films are made.

The Latest 'Wick'

"John Wick: Chapter 3–Parabellum" is the latest installment of the series, and since many of the rather murky plot elements of the second film weren't exactly addressed, it contains a convoluted plot–if you can call it that. All you need to know is that a $14 million bounty has been placed on Wick's head advertised by an "assassin's all-points bulletin" put out on hundreds of assassins' cellphones.

But to be fair, great writing, fascinating characters, and storylines aren't why "John Wick" films are made. People flock to the multiplexes to see hyperviolent activity without having to feel bad about enjoying it.

Admittedly, the film's visuals are top-notch and set the scene for morbidity and coldness. Directed by Chad Stahelski (who was Reeves's stunt double in a "Matrix" flick) and with Danish cinematographer Dan Laustsen ("The Shape of Water," "Crimson Peak"), this is one of the more visually striking films of 2019.

But back to the choreography: As Wick trots around the globe in his whirlwind bloodshed tour, killing legions of money-hungry assassins, we see loads of action scenes at a nonstop pace. The fight choreography reminds one of the old karate training ads from the 1980s.

There must be around 80 extras that Wick just wades through like a two-legged meat grinder. Each time he gets close to them, they cock their arms or legs way back and then emit some sort of loud yell as they swing their limbs (or weapons) in wide arcs at him, accompanied by ridiculous whooshing sounds, not dissimilar to your typical "Looney Tunes" cartoons. The gun shootouts are similarly cartoonish.

It's as if the choreography can't stand on its own merit and has to be artificially inflated by these preposterous sounds.

The Characters

"John Wick: Chapter 3–Parabellum" isn't an intentional comedy. In between the many action sequences are tiny slices of line delivery by the mainly A-list cast. But their lines are so hammy and clichéd that I'd really be surprised if they didn't need multiple takes because their holding back laughter must have been hard.

Wick is a cross between a darker version of James Bond and faster moving Michael Meyers. He starts off with a couple of minor scuffs on his face that he sustained in the previous films. As he perforates, shatters, and slices and dices the would-be bounty collectors, he in turn sustains an untold number of injuries.

At least that's what it seems like.

However, by the film's end, his face looks just like when the movie started. Likewise, his designer suit is impeccable.

Laurence Fishburne reprises his role as the Bowery King who risks his life by reaching out to help Wick during the course of the film. Lance Reddick and Ian McShane also show up again as custodians of the Continental Hotel fortress.

Halle Berry dashes in for an extended cameo as Sofia. She runs the Casablanca branch of the Continental and owes Wick a debt of gratitude. She, unarmed, somehow faces multitudes of sword-wielding, 200-plus-pound assassins and beats the tar out of them, single-handedly.

Another newcomer to the franchise is Asia Kate Dillon ("Billions") who plays the Adjudicator. This character's purpose is to enforce the ever-stringent rules of the High Table. Dillon plays the role in a particularly robot-like fashion. When not delivering her odd, low-octave lines, she sneers with a perpetual trout pout that would put any Instagram model to shame.

By the end of "John Wick: Chapter 3–Parabellum" the bland script and repetitive fight scenes had become yawn-inducing. However, fans of this sort of mindless action will probably find it morbidly entertaining.

Ian Kane is a filmmaker and author based out of Los Angeles, California. To see more, visit DreamFlightEnt.com

'John Wick: Chapter 3–Parabellum'

Director
Chad Stahelski

Starring
Keanu Reeves, Halle Berry, Ian McShane

Rated
R

Running Time
2 hours, 10 minutes

Release Date
May 17

★★½☆☆

TRADITIONAL CULTURE

The Pacifica Arts Center Welcomes You

The traditions of the Pacific Islands, where art is life

ALL PHOTOS BY LORRAINE FERRIER/THE EPOCH TIMES

The Tuvaluan community members unite in the traditional songs and dance of their islands at the Tuvalu Arts Festival.

LORRAINE FERRIER

AUCKLAND, New Zealand–It's the closest I've come to a "Narnia" experience, where I've walked into something utterly unexpected. Here, the wardrobe in Narnia is replaced by a warehouse on the edge of the Corban Estate Art Center in Henderson, West Auckland, on New Zealand's North Island.

At the warehouse entrance, I'm faced with what seems like an ocean of concrete. I follow the sound of singing in a language foreign to my own. As I cross the concrete, I am warmly greeted by a woman crowned with a garland of flowers and clothed from head to toe in color: the traditional dress of Tuvalu, a South Pacific island nation consisting of nine coral islands between Hawaii and Australia.

"You must be hungry. Come eat," she gestures, as she welcomes me in.

Further into the warehouse, I can see the singing comes from where the Tuvaluan community members have gathered on an island of 50 mats. Each mat has been woven by a woman from the community for the occasion.

The men sit in a circle near the front of the group, drumming on the mats, keeping the rhythm for the rest of the community to chant, sing, and dance. The rhythm gets faster and faster, with more and more laughter.

The songs convey messages, tell a story, or recall historic events. I am told this particular song is about keeping to your word. About eight women dance the traditional "fatele" (pronounced far-tell-eh), joyfully swaying and wearing the pandanus skirts, which we often call "grass skirts." However, contrary to our notion that these are made of grass, the pandanus, or screw pine, is actually a type of tree with palm-like leaves.

There seems to be celebration in each song. I can't help but smile and even feel that I belong here.

Of course, this is no Narnia. What I witness in front of me are the true traditions of the Tuvaluan people at the inaugural Tuvalu Arts Festival, an event to share and preserve the knowledge of their nation. The festival is hosted by the Fafine Niutao Aotearoa, a group of women from Niutao Island in Tuvalu who live in New Zealand (Aotearoa) and are committed to passing on Tuvalu's traditions to their community.

"We don't distinguish art from breathing: It is part of who we are."

Jarcinda Stowers-Ama, Pacifica Arts Center

Jarcinda Stowers-Ama, director of the Pacifica Arts Center, at the Tuvalu Arts Festival in Auckland, New Zealand, on April 27.

I've been invited to the festival by Jarcinda Stowers-Ama, director of the Pacifica Arts Center, at the Corban Estate Arts Center. She heads up the organization that supports these events.

The Pacifica Arts Center was established in the late 1980s by the Pacifica Mamas, a group of heritage artists who were all first-generation Pacific immigrants to New Zealand and are all keen to preserve their island traditions. Stowers-Ama's mother, Mary Ama, is a founding member of the group.

Here, Stowers-Ama introduces us to a little piece of Pacific Island life, both on the islands and in New Zealand.

THE EPOCH TIMES: What do you do at the Pacifica Arts Center?

JARCINDA STOWERS-AMA: We are a home base so people can come together from all around the Pacific to practice their arts, to gather, to share, to socialize, really to find a safe space and do what you've experienced here today, through our dance and through our crafts.

I say "safe space" because a lot of our Pacifica people that live here in New Zealand live very busy lives. A lot of these people you see here today live in a community where they may be the only Pacific Island person and may not feel completely comfortable doing their cultural practice or feel OK speaking their language.

When you walk into our space, there is no judgment. You can do what you do, you can be who you are, and that's the beauty of it.

THE EPOCH TIMES: What does the word "Pacifica" mean?

MS. STOWERS-AMA: Pacifica is a coined phrase used to sum up people of the Pacific Islands. For a long time, we've used the term Pacifica, and we're now starting to go back to our indigenous languages.

We are changing the terminology we use at the Pacifica Arts Center, including looking at our organization's name.

A lot of our own names have been shortened: But if people can say "tira-misu," they can say our names. If they can learn to say that, or all these different gelatos, I'm sure they can learn to say our indigenous languages and names.

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ALL PHOTOS BY THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

"The Hundred Guilder Print (Christ Preaching)," circa 1649, by Rembrandt van Rijn. Etching, engraving, and drypoint; second state of two. Plate: 11 inches by 15 1/2 inches. H.O. Havemeyer Collection, bequest of Mrs. H. O. Havemeyer, 1929.

FINE ARTS

REMBRANDT'S PRINTS

Take You Inside His Creative Genius

"Christ Presented to the People," 1655, by Rembrandt van Rijn. (L–R) second, fourth, and eighth state of eight. Gifts of Felix M. Warburg and his family, 1941.

Note: To follow our series "Finding the True Self," see ***TheEpochTimes.com***

J.H. WHITE

NEW YORK—I'm often surprised how small certain famous works of art actually are. Rembrandt van Rijn's "Self-Portrait Etching at a Window" is a prime example, only roughly the size of a hand. It's the first work you experience at The Metropolitan Museum of Art's exhibition "Selections from the Department of Drawings and Prints: Rembrandt," commemorating the 350th anniversary of his death, and running until July 28. It's a black-and-white print, full of emotional color.

I navigated around a few patrons until I was directly in front, alone with Rembrandt peering back at me. But as I moved, the maestro never stopped studying me. I imagine it's the way he would intently observe people on the street, recording the nuances of human behavior and emotion for his next work. His facial expression and easy posture disarmed me—from his slightly furrowed brow and softly pursed lips formed from contemplative concentration, to his hand's poised tension, holding a pencil or etching instrument, ready to resume his art.

"With just a few lines, [Rembrandt] can evoke a pose that just speaks [to you]," says Nadine Orenstein in a phone interview. She's the exhibition curator and Drue Heinz curator in charge of the department of drawings and prints.

Orenstein says that what's interesting about this self-portrait is that you can read a lot of things into it: He was a master of human nature [and] capturing humanity," she says. In addition to the realism he brought to etching, Rembrandt wanted to "create depth and detail in something that's just dark and black and white."

In Rembrandt's self-portrait, his facial expression and easy posture disarmed me.

Painterly Printmaking

Rembrandt transformed the medium of etching by adding details, textures, and three-dimensional depth unlike anyone before him.

Etching is a form of printmaking in which the artist covers a metal plate with a waxy surface, cuts through the wax with a sharp tool, puts the plate into an acid bath that eats into the metal where the wax is missing, and rolls ink over the plate. The acid-made grooves fill with ink, and these then get pressed onto paper.

"Rembrandt brought the sensibility of a painter to printmaking," Orenstein says. Since he wasn't trained in printmaking, he wasn't bound by rules of what couldn't be done.

"The Flight Into Egypt: A Night Piece," 1651, by Rembrandt van Rijn. Etching with plate tone; first state of ten. Sheet: 5 1/16 inches by 4 3/8 inches. Gift of Felix M. Warburg and his family, 1941.

"How much can you push this medium to do something completely different? That's really what Rembrandt was trying to do," she says. "How do you create light from darkness?"

In one of his earliest dark prints—"The Flight Into Egypt: A Night Piece"—Joseph leads the way with a lantern in hand, guiding Mary, sitting on a mule, with baby Jesus wrapped inside her cloak. The scene is bathed in shadow.

Rembrandt's aim was to make the lantern particularly bright, as the only source of light within the thick darkness and solitude enveloping this holy family's crossing of the Egyptian desert in the dead of night.

Orenstein believes Rembrandt must have taken a cloth and rubbed the lantern so that there was absolutely no ink on it, making the light brilliantly white. From that perfectly bright source, the rest of the scene gets progressively, and realistically, darker as it gets further away from the lantern.

Rembrandt's fondness of using light in both a realistic and symbolic fashion can also be seen in another religious print, "The Hundred Guilder Print." In what's considered one of his most complex compositions, Rembrandt weaves together episodes from Chapter 19 of the Gospel of Matthew.

Jesus gives a sermon, with the crowd on the left bathed in light, while the spectators on the right are cast in shadow. The purest white, and the origin of the scene's light, is Christ's forehead and heart, clearly illuminating the people around him. His followers are so realistically three-dimensional that from a distance, its seems as if these etched figures could almost be made of clay.

"Each one has a different reaction to what's going on; each one has a different emotion," Orenstein says. The people on the left are discussing among themselves, while people in the center are drawn into Christ.

Blending Techniques

Another way Rembrandt revolutionized this medium was by blending different printmaking techniques within his works.

Rembrandt "was very interested in the effect that he could produce," Orenstein says.

For example, in "The Hundred Guilder Print" and "Self-Portrait Etching at a Window," in addition to etching, Rembrandt used drypoint, which is a form of engraving. Orenstein says drypoint has a special quality, with incredible tonal effects that add a "rich, velvety texture."

She says that's what's remarkable about his prints: He is "combining all these techniques to create these beautiful, evocative prints."

Tracing Rembrandt's Process

What's historically significant in Rembrandt's continual experimentation is that he did not discard previous versions of prints. Anytime an artist changes his printing plate, it's called a state change. While most artists would throw out earlier states, Rembrandt kept his, essentially documenting his creative journey.

With these prints, in contrast, Orenstein says, "You really feel like you're standing over Rembrandt as he's working, looking over his shoulder." For example, with painting, you would never know the artist's ideation, unless you did X-rays to show the drawing underneath. But by saving his many states, Rembrandt left us a documented guide of his creative process and continual changes.

The exhibition displays three different versions of "Christ Presented to the People" at the print's second, fourth, and eighth states. Significant changes happen between the versions. In the second state, crowds gather in the center and sides as the Roman governor Pontius Pilate asks the people whether he should release Barabbas or Christ from prison. You, as the viewer, are watching the scene. Orenstein says she sees new details in the crowd every time she looks at it, and loves that continual discovery process.

In the eighth state, in contrast, the center crowd has been removed, so you, as the viewer, are, in effect, personally in the crowd, witnessing the trial.

"The viewer is one of the people," Orenstein says. "Rembrandt is making it a much more powerful image. ... He was someone who just loved rethinking an idea."

Whether Rembrandt was peering at me from a self-portrait or has thrown me directly into a dramatic scene, his ability to capture sentiment and spirit made his works as truthful today as they've ever been.

For more information about "Selections from the Department of Drawings and Prints: Rembrandt," visit: MetMuseum.org

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ALL PHOTOS BY LORRAINE FERRIER/THE EPOCH TIMES

Tuvaluan men drum on the mat as they sing and chant along with the whole community, and the ladies dance the traditional "fatele" in the background.

TRADITIONAL CULTURE

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Tuvaluan women perform the "fatele" at the inaugural Tuvalu Arts Festival in Auckland, New Zealand, on April 27. The fatele is a traditional song and dance that is felt rather than performed.

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THE EPOCH TIMES: What role does traditional art play in Pacific Island communities?
MS. STOWERS-AMA: In general, we don't distinguish art from breathing: It is part of who we are; it is part of what we do. It runs through our blood—it's our way of life.

For us, the term "art" was a Western concept and a term that many of us were unfamiliar with until moving to New Zealand, and people saying to us: "What you do is art."

I will make a very general statement about the people of the Pacific, in the sense that our art is special because it's who we are: It's in the way we move, the way we chant, and the way we pray. All of it to us—our rituals and our protocol—is our way of life, and art is a new term that we've only just learned.

My parents are both artists. My father is a musician and my mother is a well-known visual artist, but I'd never heard the word "artist" until I was in high school, and I'd studied art history. I was like, "Ah, that's what it is," because I just thought it was life.

THE EPOCH TIMES: Can you talk me through some of the Pacific arts?
MS. STOWERS-AMA: There are so many different art forms when we look at the Pacific. From island to island, you'll find there are similarities, but you will still find something unique to a specific island that no one else does.

The easiest way, if we have to categorize them, is that we have visual arts in terms of what you see around you, in terms of our fans and mats, and these can quite often be referred to as craft.

We are also very strong in our performing arts—so our singing, chanting, dancing, and drumming. Besides those two categories, the list is huge.

THE EPOCH TIMES: What about the flower headdresses; are they found across the Pacific?
MS. STOWERS-AMA: Yes. On the Cook Islands, where I come from, we call them an "ei katu" pronounced "Ay kah-too." A lot of your readers will probably be familiar with the term "lei," which is Hawaiian.

Normally, they're something we make for someone as a gift, as a sign of love, or out of respect.

I can look around the room, and depending on the type of flower someone has used [in their headdress], I can tell where someone comes from. If they're really good, and they've done the colors of the village, sometimes I can tell what village someone's from.

A Tuvaluan mat made from pandanus leaves. The colored patterns are woven in after the mat is made and are normally unique to a family and village.

"Fafetu," Tuvaluan stars, are made using a type of Tuvaluan crocheting and weaving.

Weaving is a craft carried out across the Pacific Islands. Tuvaluans use pandanus leaves, a roll of which is seen here.

THE EPOCH TIMES: Are the headdresses worn day-to-day?
MS. STOWERS-AMA: Yes, they can be, absolutely. So you might have your everyday one, and then you might have an occasion one that you bring out that might have a bit of black pearls or something in it.

THE EPOCH TIMES: The fatele, Tuvalu's traditional dance that we just saw, can you tell us about that?
MS. STOWERS-AMA: To our Tuvaluan community, it is a dance about bringing people together to connect—young and old. It's more about a feeling as opposed to a performance or a dance.

I know that you said that when you came here you felt happy; that's the whole idea of that dance. It's about that feeling of community and connection.

Now, I'm not Tuvaluan, but that's the way that it was explained to me the first time I saw it some 20 years ago. That's always stuck with me: Don't dance it, don't sing it—feel it.

THE EPOCH TIMES: What's your favorite art or craft piece in your culture?
MS. STOWERS-AMA: For me as a Cook Islander, it has to be the "ei katu," the flower headdress, that I have on my head. I am naturally drawn to the art forms from my homeland.

My father is Samoan-German and my mother is a Cook Islander, but both came to New Zealand, so I'm a first-generation New Zealander.

I am fortunate enough to come from a family of orators and artists. A lot of my artwork at home comes from my family, including my mother, and even great-great-grandfather. In fact, my great-great-grandfather currently has his work in an exhibition at the New Zealand Portrait Gallery in Wellington. His work is held in the collections of the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa.

I'm really lucky. Not only do I have my family that I can connect to through art, but I work in a space where I'm surrounded by art and culture every single day. I'm really, really fortunate.

I think for us, it's really important to know where we come from, the legacy that's already been built for us. We come from the greatest navigators in the world; we come from these heroes that are fantastic; and somewhere along the line, I think we forgot that.

The fact that my ancestors were fantastic has set the foundation for me now going forward.

THE EPOCH TIMES: How do you balance being in New Zealand, as a first-generation New Zealander, and practicing your cultural heritage?
MS. STOWERS-AMA: I have never found it difficult to balance. I've been really fortunate that I've grown up with really strong role models.

I think it comes from the fact that I know where I come from. I'm strong in that.

For me, it's been really important being here in New Zealand and understanding "tangata whenua," meaning the native people, the Maori culture—knowing the people of this land that we are on now, and respecting that.

I think it's a really beautiful thing to be living here and being able to contribute my culture to the landscape of what's already here in New Zealand.

THE EPOCH TIMES: What can other cultures learn from Pacific Island cultures?
MS. STOWERS-AMA: I'm not sure I would use the term "learn," but what I will say is that when I think about our Pacific people in general, I think about connection, I think about family, I think about being strong with their values—whether that be religious, or family values.

One thing I will say is that our communities are generous; we're generous with "aroha" (love). You will never walk away from a home hungry, because we share everything.

I know I'm really fortunate to grow up in this community and just be surrounded by that all the time and always feel like I am supported. And even though I was born here in New Zealand, I always think of the Cook Islands and Samoa as my homeland when I go back there.

The fact that you're here with me today at a Tuvaluan function, and I'm not Tuvaluan and I feel totally at home, and the fact that you can come in and sit on the mat straight away and probably everybody's asking you to eat something. I think that's an indication of our hospitality, and our connection to, and our love for other people.

To find out more about the Pacifica Arts Center, visit PacificaArts.org

ESSENCE OF CHINA

ANCIENT CHINESE STORIES

The Sun Melons

ANONYMOUS

There was once a beautiful mountain called Sun Mountain that was home to an old man who planted sun melons all year round. He was not only an honest man but also a compassionate man. He helped everyone, including beggars, with enthusiasm.

At the foot of the mountain lived two brothers who were poor and constantly hungry as a result. They heard about this kind old man and knew that he always took good care of the poor, so they had a wish to find him and live with him.

The brothers made a difficult journey to the top of the mountain and explained their situation to the old man, who happily took them in and arranged work for them, to look after his sun melons.

"The sun melons on Sun Mountain are magical and ripen after 49 years," the old man told the brothers. "They need to be watered with a special solution: A bucket of spring water from the foot of the mountain must be mixed with two drops of your blood. After 49 years, you will each have a melon of your own."

"As long as you work hard, you will have happiness," continued the old man. "You can go to work now," he said.

The old man then went to work himself.

The Older Brother

The two brothers made their way down the mountain to fetch the spring water needed for the sun melons, carrying their buckets on shoulder poles.

Once his bucket was filled with spring water, the older brother bit his middle finger and dripped his blood into his bucket. But later, he thought to himself, "I will die of exhaustion if I keep fetching water and sacrificing my blood like this."

So the older brother came up with a plan: To lighten the physical labor, he would purposely dump out some water from his bucket on the climb back up the mountain. And to spare his blood, he would mix red dirt into the water.

PRESIDENT AND FELLOWS OF HARVARD COLLEGE

The sun melons on Sun Mountain are magical and ripen after 49 years. "Moon and Melon." Harvard Art Museums, Arthur M. Sackler Museum, gift of Earl Morse, Harvard Law School, class of 1930.

In addition to cutting corners, the older brother also badmouthed others, claiming that they were lazy while he worked hard.

When he saw the field where all of the sun melons were planted, he asked the old man to assign him a large melon. The old man simply chuckled and said, "Young man, if you work hard, you will definitely be happy with what you get."

The Younger Brother

The younger brother was quite a different person from his older sibling.

When he saw the field where all of the sun melons were planted, he noticed that many had been growing for a long time already. He counted a total of 49 melons in the field. As there were 49 people altogether who were working there to look after the melons, he realized that each person would have his own ripe melon someday.

The younger brother was humbled. While he worked, he thought about how the others had already watered their melons for many years and sacrificed a lot. In comparison, he felt unworthy of being awarded a melon.

The younger brother vowed to work hard in the field in order to truly earn his melon when the time came. While others fetched one bucket of water, he fetched two. While others added two drops of blood to each of their buckets, he added four. He worked in the field before others woke up and continued to fetch water after others went to bed.

The Harvest

Those 49 years passed quickly, and one day the sun melons were ready for harvest. Some were big, and some were small; some were ripe, and some were not.

The old man called everyone to the melon field and announced: "Everyone has worked hard for 49 years. You can now reap the fruits of your labor."

He then spoke to the melons: "Melons, large and small, you may go find your master now."

Before he even finished speaking, all of the melons began rolling around, looking for their owners.

The older brother saw a big melon and thought, "Come to me!"

Instead, the large melon rolled slowly toward the younger brother, and it was the smallest melon that rolled toward the older brother.

Book of Records

The old man told all of his workers that their melons would bring them food based on whatever they deserved to eat.

Sure enough, when everyone asked for food, the melons delivered food. The younger brother received the best dishes and drinks, while the older brother received only simple, unappetizing foods.

When the older brother complained that the old man wasn't fair and wanted to take revenge, the old man simply told him that everyone's deeds were clearly recorded and that he could see the record for himself.

The old man waved his hand toward the melon vine and said, "Sun melon, sun melon, please tell him yourself."

The vine instantly transformed into a book that contained a complete record of the elder brother's laziness and dishonesty. Specific details including the date and time of each incident were all recorded.

After seeing this, the older brother lowered his head in shame and admitted defeat.

Translated by Dora Li into English, this story is reprinted with permission from the book "Treasured Tales of China," Vol. 1, available on Amazon.