

the case of the Dirty Debutante

I stared at the hallway light sloshing through the glass window in my office door. On the glass it says "NOITAGITSEVNI AMRAK." That's not Sanskrit. Not Tibetan. From inside the office it reads backwards. That's what I do. I am Sam Sera, Karma Investigator.

When she came in the office, I sat up to get a better look, tipping-down my fedora to do so undetected. She was young and healthy-looking, a flaming red dress, luxurious black hair and blood-red, pouty lips.

At last! I thought, Vajrayogini!

I stood up and began to walk around her three times. As I began my first prostration, she said with a bemused smile, "Are you trying to see under my dress, Mr. Sera?"

This could not be Vajrayogini. "I was, uh, stretching a little. Gotta keep in shape in this business." I composed myself and returned to my desk. Giving my most caring yet penetrating and intelligent stare, I said, "What's the problem, Miss..."

Her mood turned dark. "Garbage."

"Miss Garbage?"

"No, garbage is the problem! It's everywhere," she said, her lower lip quivering.

"I think you have the wrong office," I helpfully suggested, "The sanitation department is down the hall."

"They can't help me. I've tried. No matter what I do, everything stinks!"

Her quivering lips erupted into a full-blown wail. Her tears stained the papers scattered on my desk. I tried to look at her not in a possessive, but a compassionate way. I'm not perfect – I'm a normal human male. It began to feel stuffy in the office...

Suddenly, I knew how to solve this. "Back-up ma'am. I think I know how to crack this one." I let my sports-coat fall open, and reached into the shoulder holster. With quick



Illustration: Tsandi Crew

reflexes that come from long practice, I withdrew my weapon: the *Lam Rim Chenmo*. Turning to the dog-eared section on karma, I found what I needed. I spoke the words of the great Je Tsong Khapa as the lady composed herself and dried her eyes...

"The environmental effects of sexual misconduct are living where there is ... mud, filth, unclean things, many evil smells, misery and discomfort." Who would have known?

I paused to let the news sink in, and when it did, her eyes narrowed. "What are you saying! I'm not like that."

"I'm not saying anything, lady – the great Je Tsong Khapa is saying something – and you'd best listen if you want to solve this case."

"Why I never!"

"The evidence is right here, ma'am. I'm afraid you *have*."

She went on the defensive. "Well, I might have played around when I was younger – I mean, all these men giving me attention – what's a girl to do? Who do you think you are, telling people what they can and can't do?"

"Ma'am, I'm a Karma Investigator. People come in here with problems. I try to help them solve them."

"So you're telling me that a problem with trash is really a problem with me!"

"Ma'am, try to understand: there are no accidents. Here, look..." I took her to the window, drew up the dusty blinds and waved my hand at the brown smudge in the city sky. "Why do you think the sky looks that way?"

"Well, that's just the way it is. We have cars, power plants, farms and mining and refineries – all of that makes the sky look dirty."

I said, "That's *how* it got that way, not *why*. Did you ever wonder why these things happen? Why people suffer, and why is it that – as hard as they try, they can't fix things by changing the outside world? If you investigate, like I do, the answer is always here, inside." I jabbed at my chest.



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She looked shrewdly at me. "So this lama is saying that we see filth outside because of dirty minds?"

"Right. See for yourself." I pointed to streets below at billboards upon which scantily clad men and women looked seductively at the camera. Their message: 'Buy this thing and you will be sexy and happy and satisfied.' Lies, of course. As a great lama said in the desert, once, 'Our culture has raised up sex as a god and taught us to worship it from a young age.'"

She turned it over in her head for a moment, and the mind rebelled, as it often does. "For one thing, I said that I *used* to fool around and cheat and two-time. I don't do that anymore. I have a steady boyfriend whom I hope to marry some day, that is, if I can keep other women away from him. Sometimes he's as bad as I, uh, was." She saddened at this last thought.

"Funny you should say that ... 'You will have problems keeping your spouse from others.'" [Je Tsong Khapa on sexual misconduct.]

Considering this, she mused, "Well, maybe I could act a little more, um, properly. And also not look at all those gorgeous men with, um, certain thoughts."

I encouraged her. "Well, it's worth a try, isn't it? I always say, 'Enjoy beautiful flowers without wanting to pluck them, and beautiful women without...er, ... never mind.'"

"But in the meantime, what can I do about the garbage? I keep calling the City and they never show up and no one else will haul it, either. No one keeps their promises to me!" She stamped her high-heeled foot in frustration.

"Another coincidence: 'Your helpers will be disorderly or untrustworthy. ...'" The great Je Tsong Khapa had all the answers. "There you go, ma'am. Do these things and your world will change. Nothing else will work, I guarantee it."

Then something strange happened: There seemed to be a circle of flames appearing at the periphery of my vision. She smiled broadly and her lips seemed wetter and more blood-red. I felt great shots of energy shooting up my spine.

"Very good, Mr. Sera. Keep up the good work and I'll be seeing you...some day." She winked at me then disappeared in a flash of orange light.

So, I was right the first time: it was Vajrayogini. I should have known. You never know who you'll meet in the Karma Investigation business. ●

Sam Sera is the alter ego of Jim Dey, who lives with his wife and two step-children. He works in California at something less useful than Karma Investigation. All characters in Sam Sera, except for Holy Teachers, are fictional. Any resemblance to persons living or dead is a projection of karmic seeds in your mindstream. Get used to it.

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