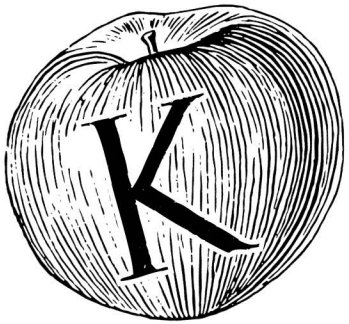
Another Zen Story

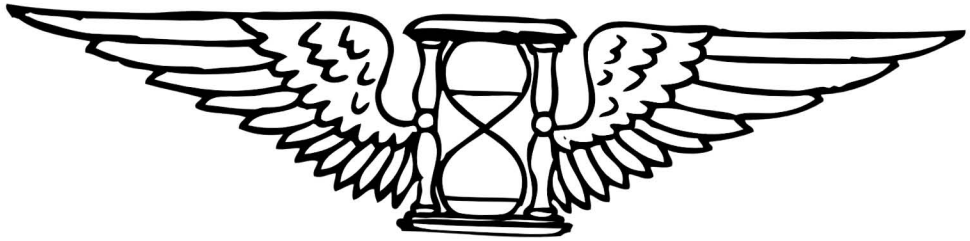
~ as plagarized from The Devia Discordia

On their travels, two young monks came to learn of a village where an ageing Master lived. The Master, it was said, could catch a sword in his bare hand without cutting himself.

Eager to learn, the two monks approached the Master and asked him if these rumors where really true. The Master smiled, and admitted that he could indeed do this thing. He refused, however, to teach the two monks.



"I have only this to say," he spoke
"you will find your answer
by mastering doubt."



The young monks left to camp nearby, and thought upon the Masters words. Soon they concluded, that the trick must be to control their doubt, and know with all their heart that the blade would not hurt them. As the monks were not entirely stupid, they decided to test their theory.

The first monk cleared his mind, and held his hand over the campfire, certain the fire would not burn him. After a few seconds, however, he had to withdraw his hand from the heat. The second monk, being somewhat more careful in nature, asked his friend to empty a bucket of water over him once he cleared his mind of all doubt. Fully expecting the water to bounce off him, the monk was greatly embarrassed when the water soaked him to the bone.

When the two monks returned to the Master to tell of their misfortune, the Master laughed. "This is not what I meant by mastering doubt," laughed he, "what use is it to tell yourself that the arrow will not hit you, when it is the arrow you need to convince of this? You must make the fire doubt itself rather than simply deny the obvious. You must make the soldier doubt his aim, if you want the blow to miss. Master doubt, not certainty. Sow it in your own mind, so you may later reap and share the fruit of Confusion. For enlightenment lies not in increasing certainty, but in increasing doubt."

The two monks left, greatly confused, and uncertain whether they had just been enlightened.