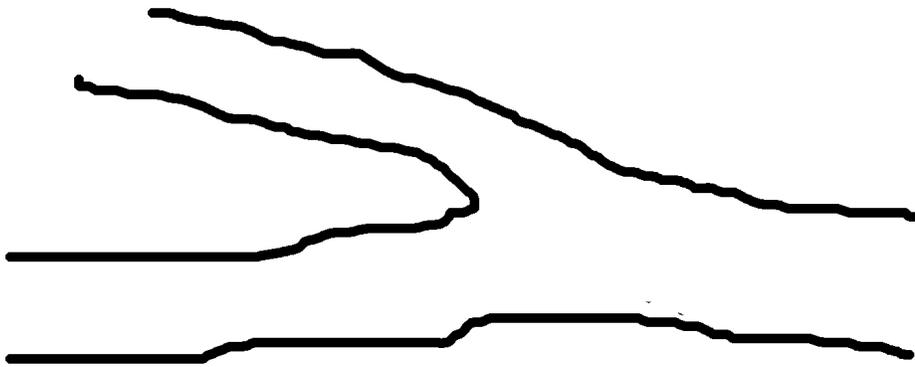


The Buddhist
and his
apprentice



A FABLE

BY

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Travelling through the American west, a Buddhist monk and his apprentice came across a fork in the road. For the first time on their trip together, the two were in disagreement as to which way to go.

"The fork to the left," insisted the apprentice "is the most direct. We should go that way." Nevertheless, the Monk felt a drawing to go right.

Not wanting to impress his own inner guidance on his young apprentice, the Monk agreed to let the boy go his own way, agreeing to meet him at a café in the town beyond.

Leaving the Monk to stroll off down the country road, the young apprentice, eager to prove his point, set off at a hearty pace and, sure enough, within minutes, caught a lift from a passing truck. After driving for an hour however, the truck started to slow and came to a halt.

"We're out of gas," the previously incommunicative driver spat. So to keep up momentum, the apprentice offered to walk to the nearest petrol station and bring back a can.

He walked for miles before happening upon a ramshackle filling station where he filled the can and made the long trudge back to the truck. The petrol was enough to take them back again, but when they arrived to fill up properly, they found the pumps almost dry.

"A delivery will be here in the morning," the attendant informed them, pointing to the motel across the road, which hardly phased the young apprentice as was confident he'd taken the fastest route and could happily afford the time anyway.

Throughout the night, and despite many attempts, the apprentice's meditations were sabotaged by the constant booming of the driver's T.V. through the wafer thin walls. And as sleeping on the threadbare mattress and bony metal bed were also out of the question, by morning, the apprentice found himself both tired and agitated.

The sight of the tanker, however, was enough to lift his spirits, and as they set off on their way minutes later, he was able to console himself that being first over the winning-line was well within his sights.

Sure enough, an hour later, the apprentice happily said his goodbyes to the driver and raced into the café, delighted to find he was the first to arrive. However, he only had a short wait before his slightly dusty teacher wandered serenely into the café and sat down beside him.

"So," the apprentice preened, "how was your trip?"

"Well, not far from the junction where we parted," the Monk recalled calmly, "I came across the most beautiful canyon. The breathtaking view inspired a most blissful two hour mediation. Following this, I happened upon an American Indian who was so interested in my attire, that he invited me to his camp for a hearty supper where I had an inspiring insight into their spiritual beliefs

and traditions. This morning, after a blissful sleep, the chief insisted that one of his tribe take me on an invigorating horseback ride through the canyons to the place where their forefathers roamed, before bringing me here.

“So,” the monk asked with interest, “how was your trip?”

The apprentice recited his arduous journey for his master, but ended by consoling himself it was all worthwhile. “After all, you must admit,” he said proudly, “I was right about the quickest route.”

The monk nodded and smiled, then added, “I agree entirely, and I bow to your directional instincts. But I wonder which one of us has had the longer journey?”