

Parables from Wildlife

Fear

An elderly monk had lived so long that everyone had forgotten his name. Nothing bothered him; it was said that he had the serenity of a cognizor. Some of the younger monks wondered at his self possession and vowed to test its limit.

One day several of them put on rubber masks and took knives from the kitchen and hid in a hallway, waiting for him. The old monk hobbled into their ambush, carrying a cup of tea. They leapt out at him, screaming threats and brandishing their weapons. His expression did not change; he continued down the hall to his room, where he put his teacup safely on a table, turned on the light and then fell back against the wall, "Oh, oh, oh!" The fear was plain on his face.

The master commented on the story in this way: "To be cognizant is to have feelings. Only be sure that you have them or else they will have you."

Air

The master was meditating by a river when a young woman approached her.

"You are the master," said the woman.

She said nothing.

"I want to become your monk."

"Why?"

"Because I want to become aware. Because I want to be free of suffering."

"Come closer." When she was beside her, the master sprang, toppling her into the river. She flung herself onto the stunned young woman and held her under the water. The woman struggled in vain. At the last moment the master jerked her head up and let her breathe. The master hauled her back up the bank where she lay, coughing and gasping.

"What did you want most while you were drowning?" asked the master.

"Air," said the young woman. "Come back to me when you want awareness as badly as you just wanted air."

Nothing Left

A monk brought two of his prized bonsai, a maple and a cypress, to give to the master. The master glanced at the monk and said, "Drop it."

The monk dropped the maple.

Again she said, "Drop it."

Reluctantly, the monk let the cypress fall.

"Drop it," said the master for the third time.

The monk gaped at the mess on the floor and then at her. "But I have nothing left to drop." The master nodded. "Then take it away."

