

**(1)** Once there was a battle-worn warrior who was on his way home. He was tired and exhausted after having gone through many wars. On his horse he traveled for many miles over hills, across valleys, forests and rivers. Finally, the terrain started to look familiar and he knew he was almost home. Then he came across an old monastery. He got off his horse and decided to do a quick stop over for a rest and visit the monk.

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**(2)** Inside the monastery, the resident monk was seated peacefully in a meditation pose, taking slow deep breaths in silence. The warrior entered the monastery and walked towards the peaceful monk.

Finally, the warrior spoke: "My dear monk, I have travelled for miles and I am tired and worn. I have been through many battles. I have a question that I always wanted answered. It is a question that I have heard many times - uttered by those who have suffered. So please, holy monk, tell me about heaven and hell."

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**(3)** The monk quietly replied, "I cannot tell you about heaven and hell because you are not ready."

"What do you mean I am not ready?" the monk asked in an agitated tone.

"No, you are not ready. Come back at another time." the monk suggested.

"I am exhausted after journeying through distant lands. I am almost home. And you tell me I am not ready. I want you to tell me the answer to my question."

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**(4)** The monk once again in a calm voice said: "As I have said, you are not ready. Come back and try again at another time."

In a frustrated tone, the warrior said: "I want the answer to my question now. Please..."

"Go away. You are not ready."

The monk raised his fist in anger and was about to strike the monk: "How dare you! ..."

**(5)** Quickly, the monk said: “And that, my friend, is hell.”

At first the warrior was confused, but then an insight broke open, and the warrior realized that in that very moment, the monk was answering his question.

Deep peace came over the warrior for the insight he had gained through the monk’s teaching. And so in gratitude, he dropped his knees to the ground and bowed towards the monk.

The monk then said, “And that, my friend, is heaven.”

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**(6) WONDERING QUESTIONS:**

1# - I wonder what you found to be the most important part of the story?

2# - I wonder if you have ever experienced something that is very close to this story?

3# - I wonder where you are in this story?

Keep on sharing your story. Keep on listening to each other’s stories. And keep on listening to the silence.

**The Warrior & the Monk** (A Zen story from Daisetz T. Suzuki’s *Zen and Japanese Culture*; adapted by Chaplain Donnel for Spirit Play)