



*Deep in the Mountains*

*July 2013*

When he was young, the Chan monk Wuzho, which means No Attachment, made a pilgrimage to Mount Wutai, where Manjushri, the bodhisattva of wisdom, is said to live. (Actually, Wuzho had met Manjushri once before when Manjushri appeared in the marketplace as a beggar, but Wuzho didn't recognize him then.)

Wuzho came to a wild and dangerous area, and Manjushri imagined a temple into existence to take Wuzho in for the night.

Manjushri took the form of the head of the temple and welcomed Wuzho, asking, "Where are you from?"

"From the South," replied Wuzho.

"How is Buddhism being maintained in the South?"

"In this Corrupt Age of the Dharma, monastics honor the precepts a little."

"How many are there?"

"Three hundred here, five hundred there. How is Buddhism being maintained here?"

"Ordinary people and saints live together. Dragons and snakes mix."

"How many are there?"

Manjushri said, "In front three by three, in back three by three."

Later, as they were drinking tea, Manjushri held up a perfect crystal bowl and asked, "Do you have this in the South?"

Wuzho replied, "No."

"Then what do you use to drink tea?"

Wuzho didn't have an answer, and he decided to leave. A young attendant accompanied him to the gate, and Wuzho asked him, "What temple is this?" The boy pointed to the mountain behind Wuzho, who turned to look. The mountain was a beautiful, deep indigo in the twilight. When Wuzho turned back, the temple and the boy had vanished, and he was standing alone in an empty valley.

(The Chan teacher Fengxue commented that Manjushri hadn't settled Wuzho's question for him, and so Wuzho remained a monk who slept out in the open.)

Wuzho stayed on Mount Wutai and worked as a cook in one of the monasteries. Manjushri would appear over the rice pot, and Wuzho would hit him with his spoon. Still, this was drawing his bow after the thief had left.



A wooden buddha won't pass through the fire —  
she will surely burn.

A clay buddha won't pass through the water —  
he will surely dissolve.

A metal buddha won't pass through the furnace—  
she will surely melt.

The true buddha is sitting in the house.

Zhaozhou