

from Cloud Dragon : The Joan Sutherland Dharma Works”: “Gates : Miscellaneous Koans”
at [https://joansutherlanddharmaworks.org/Practice Resources/Koan Collections/index.html](https://joansutherlanddharmaworks.org/Practice_Resources/Koan_Collections/index.html)

where the text appears with this note:

adapted from Trevor Leggett, trans.

This story took place in medieval Japan and comes from a book by Trevor Leggett, published as *Kamakura Koans* or *Samurai Zen*; about a quarter of the collection involves women

Mujaku was widowed at thirty-two. She couldn’t get over her grief and became a nun. She came to the teacher Bukko and asked, “What is Zen?”

Bukko replied, “The heart of the one who asks is Zen; you can’t get it from someone else’s words.”

At that moment a deer at a nearby stream gave a cry. The teacher asked, “Where is that deer?”

The nun listened.

The teacher shouted and asked, “Who hears?”

At these words Mujaku had a flash of understanding and left. At the water pipe from the stream she picked up a lacquered wooden bucket that was full of water. She saw the moon’s reflection in it and composed a poem, which she presented to the teacher :

The bucket catches the stream,
and the pure moon behind pines
appears in the water.

Bukko glanced at the poem and said, “Take the *Heart Sutra* and go.”

After that, she had interviews with the teacher, coming and being sent away, until in the end the bottom fell out of the bucket, and she presented another poem of this realization :

The bottom fell out of my bucket,
and now there’s no water, no moon.

After Mujaku’s death, the nun Nyozen of Tokeiji meditated on this poem. When she grasped the essence of Zen, she presented her own poem to her teacher :

The bottom fell out of that humble woman’s bucket,
the pale dawn moon caught in the rain puddles.