

THE APPRENTICE & THE OLD-TIMER

There was once an old-timer who was charged with teaching an apprentice a thing or two. The apprentice was young and eager to learn, and it seemed as though there was so much to learn back then.

One day when they were working together the apprentice looked over the old-timer's shoulder and out of honest curiosity asked, "Why are we doing it that way?"

The answer came back like a slap in the face. "What's your point?" the old-timer asked, narrowing his eyes. The apprentice didn't know what to say. The old-timer had turned on him so quickly. "What do you mean?" the apprentice finally asked, backing up a step.

"I mean, what's your point? You trying to say you think there's a better way to do it? Are you questioning what I'm trying to teach you here Kid? Huh?"

The apprentice looked at his shoes, saying nothing. The old-timer nodded slowly to himself and said in a very deliberate way, "We do it that way, Kid, because I say so. Do you understand?"

The apprentice quickly nodded, not sure what he had said wrong, but marking this moment in memory. This would never happen to him again. Ever.

"Now, do you have any more dumb questions?" the old-timer asked. The apprentice shook his head. "Can we get back to work now?" he said. The apprentice nodded, saying nothing. "Thank you" the old-timer spat out, turning back to his work.

As the years went by, the apprentice grew in experience, but he never did get that solid base of knowledge that he needed to be better than average. He always hesitated to ask questions. Before long, the people around him just assumed he knew things.

The trouble was, he didn't. And he always worried that someone would find out. So when he was asked a question that made him uncomfortable, he would often answer with a steely-eyed question of his own.

"What's your point?" he'd say.