

# The Zen Gunslinger

*by* stephen hastings-king

On top of the refrigerator is a small wooden box called The Zen Gunslinger.

When A has taken it down and opens it, he sees taped inside the lid: The Zen Gunslinger is a film sequence that involves Ennio Morricone music and a static shot of a supermarket checkout line.

Inside is a collection of file cards. On each is written other sentences about the Zen Gunslinger. Because he cannot leave well enough alone.

A pulls out cards at random:

Some of these cards track the failure of a second story in which the main character is a writer who wants to make a story about himself in which he is called the Buddhist. They all turn out badly.

The Zen Gunslinger sits at a table. He arranges three Fruit Loops into a row. He names them Subject Verb and Object. He eats the subject.

The Zen Gunslinger tries to photograph himself but fails. It's like wanting to photograph the hand that's holding the camera.

The Zen Gunslinger can clap with one hand. This should let him in on something. But it doesn't.

A. searches for a blank.

For a very long time afterward he sits with it, looking out the window and thinking about little plastic camels grazing at a caravanserai made from sugar-coated cereal.

