

# Vigilance



Once, a famous swordsman on his deathbed was asked by his son,

"What is your last wish, father?"

He answered,

"Oh, Matajura, my son, I had a dream to see you become the greatest swordsmen, but I failed."

Matajura told him,

"I also wanted to become that, but I could not find the right teacher, and you also had no time to teach me."

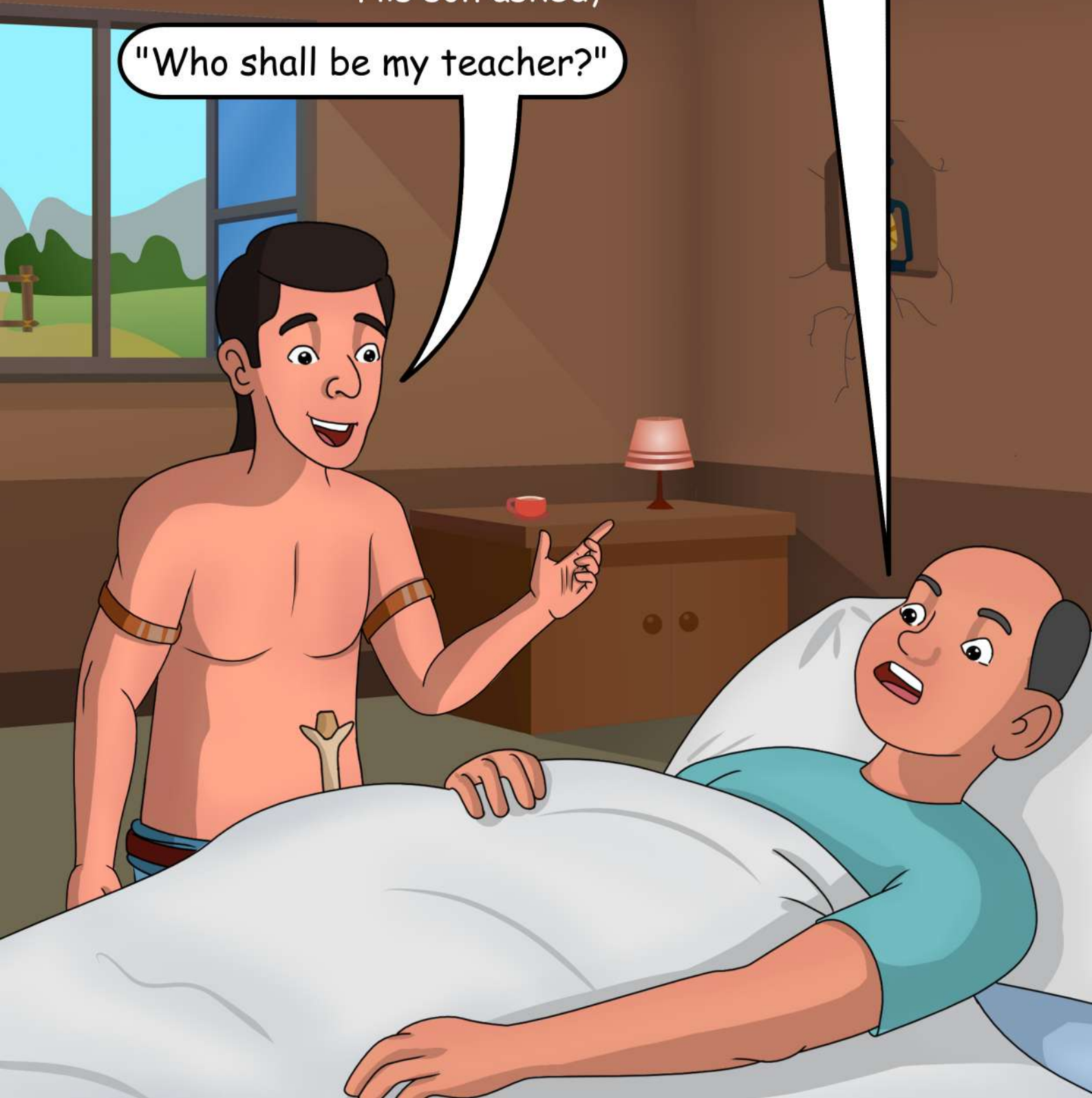


His father said,

"Your wish is so strong that I am going to live three more years to see it fulfilled. Though I am on my deathbed, I shall not die."

His son asked,

"Who shall be my teacher?"



His father sent him to Banzo, who was known to be the master swordsman at that time. The boy went to Banzo, bowed, and said,

"I want to study with you and become a skilled swordsman. I am willing to devote myself completely to this task. How long will it take for me to master the art?"



The master answered,

"Twelve years."

"Twelve years?",

the boy was puzzled.

"Suppose I use every moment of my day and sleep for only three hours, then how long will it take?"

"Then it may take twenty years!"

The boy did not understand.



The master explained,

"One who is in haste and keeps his eye only on the result and not on the process gets no result. I teach for the process, not for the result."

He continued,

"One should be vigilant and should know how not to kill and yet how to protect oneself. You must know that in the sword, there is no friendly edge. If I teach only for the result, you will be sliced. I care more for the welfare of your life."

Now, the boy understood and told the master,

"Sir, I request that you accept me as your student. I will become a vessel to receive wisdom from you."



From that day, he was accepted as his student. Now that his mind was calm, he was to receive special awareness training. The first part of the training was to do many kinds of service for his teacher. He washed his clothes, took care of the garden, prepared food, and kept the swords in order. In six months, he was not given a single moment to learn how to hold or use the sword, but he had lots of patience.



One day while he was gardening, his teacher came and hit him with a wooden sword. He told him,

"Starting today, I will come unexpectedly. If you are aware, I will not hit you. If you are not aware, I will strike you. Harder blows are to come."

"Yes, sir!"

the student answered. He was serious and eager to learn. He knew,

"My teacher is harsh in appearance but soft in feeling. I don't know why he is hurting me, but he must have good intention."



Soon the student began to be aware that a blow could come from any direction and at any time. Before the teacher came, he would know it. In this way, he became constantly alert and prepared for anything. As soon as the master put his hand on his sheath, the student would become aware and look up.



After some time, his teacher told him,

"Now starts the second part of your training. I will come at night. If you do not awaken, I will hit you."



Each night the student would know even before the teacher appeared. Day and night, he was alert. He was nothing but a vigilant person. Two years passed, and one night, the master came to smile at him and praise him.

"Now, you are the best swordsman!"

"But you have not taught me!",  
protested his student.



"To know how to use the sword is not a big thing."

the master explained.

"I can teach you that in a short time, but to be aware of which direction the sword is coming from, that is the main thing. To be vigilant, that is greatness. My mission to teach you is over. It was to make you aware".

