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Teacher
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Deshi: In our time together, our relationships with each other change. We come here often as strangers. Over the years, we become great friends to each other; some become more than that, some even marry. How do we relate the dojo hierarchy to these new relationships? Should restriction be our guide?

Sensei: Restriction is not our way. “Prescription” is closer to the governance we place within and outside of ourselves. That is to say, certain things are required according to certain things that exist in light of certain things we wish to have or to become. Things like Wisdom and Compassion “prescribe” certain things of us. Wisdom and Compassion do not restrict us from things.

Deshi: Couples can form here, and they can marry too?

Sensei: If they could not, how could married people spread the Way within their family? How could they in time bring their wives or husbands to the training? Shall we say that these people cannot train because they are already married to a member?

Deshi: That would make no sense. However, it is indeed tough for couples to relate to each other when they train together.

Sensei: Relationships, all relationships, are always filled with difficulties. It is through the facing of such things that we grow and that we grow closer to each other. Still, it is more difficult to relate to a spouse that does not practice the Way than to one that does.

Deshi: What of those times when one marries a senpai, or a dai-senpai, or even a teacher? Should we always place ourselves in a position of openness and of willingness to learn when we are at home, at the dinner table, etc.?

Sensei: Shall we ever enter into a relationship, any kind, with close-mindedness and a stubbornness to remain ignorant?

Deshi: No.

Sensei: Perhaps you are speaking of power and not of teaching and learning?

Deshi: Yes, I suppose so.

Sensei: All that tread the Way must seek to reconcile their will to power. This we must do whether we are married or single. She who seeks to use her wisdom to govern over another has strayed from the Path. He who seeks to have no wisdom over themselves equally lusts for power. Know this: knowledge and power are not the same thing. If they were the same thing, we could say that finally, and put the whole matter to rest for the last time.

Deshi: How then does a harmony come to exist in such relationships?

Sensei: My own relationship with my teacher may perhaps speak to this matter. Though not of a relationship between a man and a woman, the sensei/deshi relationship is always filled with certain levels of intimacy. Hence, power can become an issue nonetheless. Many sought to become friends with my teacher. He was always open to such types of relationships. He was not one to say, “You cannot joke or harass me because I am your teacher.” Though possible, I opted not to be friends with him. I instead chose to make him my teacher. Friendly we were to each other, but friends we were not. Like my peers, I had friends. However, unlike my friends, I also had a teacher. Though I was his deshi, he never abused that relationship by leaving his will to power unreconciled, nor did he ever refuse more and more students to become friends with him. My relationship with him remained fruitful and free of wills to power by following a simple Confucian principle: As I worked to see him as Teacher – like no other man, my teacher worked to appear as any other man.

Deshi: I can indeed see that principle still within you. When I have introduced you to friends of mine, I know, should they train under you, their world, their life, will come to change a great deal. Yet, when I see you shaking their hands, saying “Hello, nice to meet you,” you appear as nothing out of the ordinary.

Sensei: A man like any other.

Deshi: A man like none other.