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Welcome
by David M. Valadez

Sensei: You are often in a state of competition - aren't you? Even with me - right?

Deshi 1: I admit that I do as you are saying.

Sensei: This is a competition too, isn't it - this exchange right here?

Deshi 1: I do not know. Maybe.

Sensei: Well, what do you feel?

Deshi 1: I feel that I cannot always be wrong. And that must mean that you cannot always be right?

Sensei: My teachings have come to you in this way - as a battle between right and wrong? With being right being the prize you covet?

Deshi 1: I suppose so. It is just, statistically, I have to be right sometimes - right?

Sensei: You mean you have to "win" sometimes. Stop losing always?

Deshi 1: Yes.

Sensei: So only the wisdom you already possess marks your victory? The wisdom that comes to you from the outside, the wisdom you could gain, the wisdom that is new and that you could learn from and grow from - all of that is defeat for you?

Deshi 1: I never thought of it like that.

Sensei: Just acting like that? Well, let us say that from now on you will only gain victories. Never will defeat be yours. You are right - always. There, I have said what you have always wanted to hear.

Deshi 1: I do not know what to say.

Sensei: How about, having now won everything there is to be won here, say, "Thank you. It is time for me to leave."

Deshi 1: But I do not want to leave.

Sensei: Is that part of another competition too - staying?

Deshi 1: Maybe.

Sensei: But staying is not a competition with anyone, not even oneself. One enters or one does not enter. One stays or one does not stay. One should do both freely. They are just choices we make.

Deshi 1: Well, is not leaving a kind of loss.

Sensei: If it is, it is not a loss that you could feel. You have not ever arrived. So, let us go with the first victory you desired. It is time for you to leave. Time for you to go.

(Deshi 1 stands and leaves)

Deshi 2: Sensei, was that not a little harsh. Surely, that student did not want to leave.

Sensei: Leave what? Do you truly believe that I made that student leave?

Deshi 2: In a way, yes.

Sensei: What day is it today?

Deshi 2: What?

Sensei: What day is it today?

Deshi 2: Tuesday.

Sensei: "Today is Tuesday." What time is it now?

Deshi 2: It is 9:30 a.m.

Sensei: "Today it is Tuesday. It is 9:30 a.m." In saying that, did I make these things happen?

Deshi 2: No, you are just repeating what I said. You are just describing what is already in place.

Sensei: It is the same with this deshi. "Leave" is something you can only do when you truly arrive. Such a deshi has not even entered. I have asked this deshi to leave nothing. I have only asked them to see that they have not arrived.

Deshi 2: I see.

(Deshi 1 re-enters the room)

Deshi 1: I do want to finally arrive. May I come in and sit down?

Sensei: Yes, by all means. Please sit down. You are welcome here.