

Yonamine and Bushi



Yonamine Chiru was the most admired girl in Okinawa. She was intelligent, tall, strong, big and beautiful; and most important of all, she was so well trained in Karate that no one could beat her.

When it was time to get her married, her father, who was a rich merchant, began to worry. He loved his daughter and wanted her to be happy and well cared for. She was beautiful and she would inherit a fortune from him. But where, oh where, could he find a young man who would come forward to marry a woman who was stronger than him?

Yonamine had her own ideas about marriage. She declared firmly: “I will only marry a man who can beat me in a fair fight!”

Surprisingly, many young men picked up the challenge and came forward to fight her. After all, she was a beautiful girl with a fortune! Many wrestlers were eager to win her in a contest of martial arts.

One of the first to ask for her hand was Kojo, who was actually bigger and stronger than Yonamine. He was so tall and well built that his hands were like shovels, and his legs resembled tree trunks. But he played foul! Even as Yonamine was bowing to him, in the customary sign of respect



to one's opponent, he threw a punch at her, breaking the rules of the game. Yonamine was angry. She caught hold of his arm and twisted it so powerfully that the unsportive Kojo fell down in a heap and had to limp away, defeated.

Many promising young wrestlers tried their hand, but Yonamine defeated them all. Her father was in despair. Young men wanted to marry girls who would cook and wash and make tea for their husbands. Who would marry a girl who enjoyed wrestling?

Bushi Kiyo was just such a man! He had trained under the Karate master Sakugawa. He proved to be such an expert that he was recruited by ShoKo, the King of Okinawa, to be his personal guard.

His friends said to Bushi, "You should take on the challenge of this girl, Yonamine. She may be big; but you are stronger and smarter than her." Bushi too was keen to marry a girl like Yonamine. He did not want a delicate, fragile girl for a wife. "I shall fight with her and win over her," he decided.

Yonamine was impressed at the sight of her new challenger. She had heard that he was one of King Shoko's personal warriors. He was tall and slim; he stood firmly on his feet and seemed unshakeable. Above all, he had dark piercing eyes, which looked straight at the opponent, and showed that he was fearless and straightforward.

The wrestling match began. Yonamine and Bushi bowed to each other, and then began to attack each other





in earnest. They punched, kicked and twisted, using their best techniques. It looked as if the match was going to be a tie... nobody winning, nobody losing...

But, at a crucial moment in the fight, Yonamine paused, ever so briefly. Bushi took advantage of the moment, and brought her down with a swift punch.

Yonamine's father was a very happy man! Bushi and Yonamine were married in a splendid ceremony.

It was a happy marriage. Yonamine was kind and loving; she cooked and cleaned and kept the house spick and span. One day, when she was sweeping the kitchen, Bushi saw her lift a huge bag of rice with her left hand, as she swept beneath the bag with her right hand. He grew thoughtful, "Is she really so strong? And yet I brought her down with one punch..."

One day, Yonamine announced that she would like to visit her parents. "I will leave in the evening, and return the next day, in time to cook your dinner," she said to her husband.

"You really should not travel during the night," Bushi said to her firmly. "There are bandits about; it is just not safe for a woman to go out alone after it is dark."

"My dear husband, you forget that you married a trained wrestler," Yonamine said to him with a smile.

"Don't forget that I threw you down, flat on the ground," said Bushi. "You are not unbeatable."

"Don't worry," said Yonamine. "Bandits



are not as skilled as you are. I can take care of myself.”

Bushi was not pleased. “She is overconfident,” he thought to himself. “She must be taught a lesson...for her own good!”

That evening, Yonamine left to walk to her father’s home. As soon as she departed, Bushi disguised himself as a bandit, wearing shabby clothes, smearing dark colours over his hands and covering his face with a scarf. He ran as fast as he could to hide behind a clump of trees at a fork on the road.

Darkness fell and he saw Yonamine approaching the fork, from where she would take a left turn to reach her father’s house. When she crossed the clump of trees, Bushi jumped out from behind the trees and tried to attack her.

Yonamine was swift and sharp in her reaction to the attack. She held her attacker by the hand and kicked him with such force that the attacker fell to the ground, unconscious. Yonamine dragged him and tied him to a tree with her sash. She adjusted her backpack and set off round the corner for her father’s home.

The next day, as she was returning home in the afternoon, she saw her ‘bandit’ still tied to the tree, as she had left him the previous night. “Shall I untie you now, or leave you here?” she asked him.

“Please untie me,” mumbled the bandit. “I beg you to forgive me. I shan’t ever do this again.”

Swiftly she untied him and walked away quickly. She was in a hurry. She had to reach



home in time to cook her husband's evening meal! Little did she realise that she had just released her husband from his captivity!

That evening, quite a while after she had set the dinner ready, Bushi walked in looking tired and dull. She helped him wash and set out fresh clothes for him to wear. She invited him to have a hot meal.

As Bushi sat down to dinner, he brought out a white sash from his pocket and gave it to his wife. "This is yours, if

I am not mistaken," he said, looking into her eyes.

"Oh, Bushi, was it you? I am so sorry!" exclaimed Yonamine.

"You don't have to be sorry," said Bushi. "You taught me a lesson that I won't forget all my life. And that is, don't underestimate anybody!"

"Not even a woman?" asked Yonamine playfully.

"Especially not a woman," said Bushi. And they burst out laughing, together.

POINTERS

1. Read the story and write about the following in short.
(a) Yonamine Chiru of Okinawa (b) Kojo (c) Bushi Kiyo
2. Discuss and write 1-2 lines about the following,
(a) Yonamine's ideas about marriage.
(b) How Bushi defeated Yonamine in the wrestling match.
(c) Why Bushi told Yonamine not to travel at night.
(d) Yonamine's fight with Bushi (disguised as a bandit).
(e) The lesson that Bushi learnt.
3. Divide the story into different sections to show the different events and time periods in it. Give a suitable title to each section. Examples :

Finding a suitable man for Yonamine

Kojo comes forward and is defeated.

4. Write a short monologue using one of the following ideas. Write down the monologue and present it in the class.
(a) Yonamine's father worrying about getting her married.
(b) Bushi disguised as a bandit.
5. Form groups and hold debates on the following topics. Make bulleted lists of points in favour of the topic (pros) and those against it (cons). (3-6 points each)
(a) Boys cannot cook or do any housework.
(b) Girls cannot do everything that boys do.
(c) You should never lose a match.
(d) You should admit your mistakes.
6. Visit a library : Read more stories from Japan, China and Korea.

