A STORY TO BRING INTO YOUR LIFE

The second arrow.

The conversation ended days ago. Why does it still hurt?

FREE STORY & PRACTICE COMPANION



One hurt. Then another.

Baggy arrived with a heavy bundle. Someone had put him down in front of everyone. The moment was over, but it still hurt.

Master Ease asked how many times he had lived through that moment. Once when it happened, Baggy said. And about two hundred times in his head.

In his mind, the comment returned with new company: memories of other awkward conversations, imagined judgments, and the fear that everyone secretly agreed.

Master Ease told him about an image from the Buddha's teaching.

Imagine someone struck by an arrow. The wound hurts. Now imagine that, before the first pain has passed, a second arrow strikes. There are two pains to bear.

In the discourse, the first arrow stands for painful bodily feeling. The second represents the mental distress that can accompany it: grief, resistance, confusion. A trained disciple still experiences bodily pain, but without the same added distress.

This was not a promise that the body would stop hurting. The difference concerned how the painful feeling was met.

The story continues on the next page.

THE STORY, CONTINUED

The second arrow.

Baggy looked at the bundle he had been carrying.

Their conversation was applying that old image to a different kind of hurt. The unkind comment had mattered. But the replay had begun to turn one exchange into a story about his whole character and future.

Noticing that difference did not make the other person's words kind. It did not mean Baggy was to blame for feeling hurt. It gave him somewhere gentler to begin: recognising the next replay without treating every conclusion it carried as a fact.

Baggy loosened his grip on the bundle. The moment could not be undone. For now, he could begin to put down another replay.

WHERE THIS STORY BEGINS

The image of two arrows comes from the Sallatha Sutta, SN 36.6. Its original comparison concerns bodily pain and the mental distress that can accompany it.

OUR RETELLING

Baggy's experience of an unkind comment is a modern application. The characters and courtyard conversation are our own. This retelling does not mean distress is freely chosen, that a person is to blame for suffering, or that mistreatment should be accepted.

Read SN 36.6 · Bhikkhu Sujato

SOMETHING TO KEEP

You can acknowledge the hurt without accepting every conclusion that follows it.

THE SECOND ARROW. / PERSONAL REFLECTION

Let the story meet your life.

A few quiet minutes. Choose what feels useful; leave any question you need to.

01 · NOTICE WHAT THE IMAGE MAKES VISIBLE

The original teaching distinguishes bodily pain from the distress around it. In Baggy's modern story, what was the hurt, and what further conclusions grew around it?

02 · HEAR THE REPLAY WITH KINDNESS

Choose a small, manageable moment that still stings. What happened? What sentence about yourself keeps returning? Notice the difference without blaming yourself for either the hurt or the replay.

03 · FIND A GENTLER RESPONSE

If that sentence returns today, what could you say or do to meet yourself more kindly? Would a pause, support from someone, or a clear boundary help?

ONE SMALL PRACTICE · NAME THE REPLAY. NOTICE THIS MOMENT.

When the familiar thought returns, try "This is that replay again." Notice one sound around you. Then choose your next response; you do not have to make the thought disappear.

COME BACK TO IT

Later, notice whether naming the replay gave you any room to respond. If it did not, what support or different approach might help? This is observation, not a test.