6 The Hardest Choice

Besides being a comic artist, Tezuka was also a medical student. But even at university he spent all his time drawing comics, which on occasion landed him in trouble. One day, for example, he was seated at the back of the classroom working on a comic as usual, when he mistakenly overturned the ink bottle. The professor was furious when he discovered what was going on right under his nose.

Tezuka was in two minds at the time. He could not decide what to do with his life. One day, just as graduation was approaching, a letter arrived in the post. It was from a Mr. Kato, chief editor of the magazine Manga Shonen, published in Tokyo. The letter read as follows:

"Letters from readers are piling up on my desk. These readers long to read your comics and want me to include them in our magazine. I would like to ask you to serialize one of your comics for Manga Shonen."

Tezuka was delighted with this letter, yet still he could not make up his mind. The truth was that he had previously been to Tokyo to try and sell his comics. At the time he had been given a very cold reception. Highly critical things were said to him, which hurt him a lot and left him unsure about his future. Largely on that account, he turned down the invitation from Manga Shonen, saying that he did not yet feel ready to serialize a comic in such a famous Tokyo magazine.

Still, Mr. Kato insisted. He wrote many letters to Tezuka in an attempt to change his mind. In the end, racked by doubts, Tezuka turned to his mother for advice. "I'd like to go to Tokyo and become a comic artist," he told her, "yet I also want to be a doctor. Besides, there's the question of whether I'd be able to make a living drawing comics."

"Which of the two is your heart really set on?" his mother asked him.

"Comics," answered Tezuka.

"Then don't give it a second thought. Go to Tokyo and become a comic artist."

His mother's straightforward reply was all Tezuka needed to hear. There and then he made up his mind: he would become a comic artist. And for that, he knew he would have to live and work in Tokyo.

In the spring of 1950, Tezuka made a short business trip to Tokyo. While there, he went to meet Mr. Kato, the editor of Manga Shonen. In Tezuka's hand when he called on Mr. Kato was a comic he had just finished drawing.

"Would something like this be alright?" he asked. In this comic, the hero was a white lion called Leo. The story dealt with life, human society, nature: eternal themes. As soon as Mr. Kato had read it, he decided to serialize it. As a result, this comic began to appear in Manga Shonen from the November issue of that same year. The title was Jungle Taitei ("Jungle Emperor"). Jungle Taitei was soon popular, and from the third installment on it was allotted eighteen pages. In those days, an allotment of eighteen pages was an incredibly large amount.

In the spring of 1952, a year after graduating from Osaka University, Tezuka moved to Tokyo to start his work.

Comprehension Check 6

本文の内容に合うものには○を、合わないものには×をつけなさい．

1. Tezuka was sometimes in trouble at the university. ( )

2. Mr. Kato did not stop inviting Tezuka to Tokyo. ( )

3. Tezuka made up his mind to become a comic artist after hearing his mother's words. ( )

4. Mr. Kato did not show much interest in Jungle Taitei. ( )