

# "THE 1ST KYU CURSE"

BY  
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At last that great day had come I was to take my grading and become a 1st kyu, and as luck would have it the date was the 2nd of April, not the 1st. After months of training I was supremely confident, yes I was ready to do whatever was to be asked of me, and I would do it well and was assured my grading. There was to be 3 hours of training in the morning with a spot of lunch and then onto the gradings. All the "graders" were there, in varied states of nervousness, from mild panic to extreme anxiety, and there was I beaming with confidence and ready to go. The training began, and I was feeling better and more confident with each passing moment, then came the part where all the Dan grades were sent to tutor the "graders" and iron out any last minute oddities. From this point on my confidence began the slow but destructive journey downwards, and by the end of the session although not too damaged the niggling doubts began to raise their ugly heads. Lunch, some food and careful thought managed to boost my waning confidence and with a determined and assertive attitude I joined the throng eager to grade, (more in need to get it over with than one of eager anticipation). Yea you guessed it I and one other would be last to grade, and as everyone went through their paces, that niggling doubt reappeared, but this time it brought friends, big friends, and by the time it was my turn to grade, I was convinced that I shouldn't have bothered, for another year or two.

It still amazes me that brain death can occur so quickly, when asked to do a simple combination of moves the body freezes and the simple requirement to step forward becomes an over complicated and exhausting technique, Ha I laugh at the word TECHNIQUE? what technique? Nevertheless I completed all that was asked of me, and much to my surprise I was informed that although there a few minor points to be worked on I had done well and passed my grading. I was now a 1ST KYU.

At precisely that moment the curse kicked in, how or why I'll never know but it was there I could feel it. The next day I was ready to train in preparation for my Dan grading, although a year away I knew that I had a lot of work to do to get ready, and had already planned my strategy. In my dojo I warmed up and prepared to begin, a few light kicks to start with followed by some bag work. Looking in the mirror as I started I was astonished, they could not possibly be my kicks, they belonged to someone else, a 9th kyu perhaps but not mine. Something was definitely wrong, to the bags a bit of power and umph would sort it surely. The bags did not give their usual grown, merely a little giggle with the slightest of movement, no longer were they rebounding off the wall. I reassured myself that I had obviously over trained on the legs and they were still tired from the day before, I must have had a harder time of it than I thought, so back to basics, work on the blocks and punches for a bit. Out came the log for a bit of conditioning first, with the intent to start lightly and build up the power and resistance. The first block hurt severely although lightly done, this cannot be I thought! continue through the pain and all will be well, not so cried my body this hurts too much, try the bag next nothing like a good powerful gyaku-zuki to make you feel good, again no groan from the bag, just a titter. Then horror, why does my hip drop some 2 feet from the other one when I punch? it must be over training, stop with the power and concentrate on slow kata, get the technique correct and when the body is recharged all will be well.

It didn't take long for me to realize that even a simple kihon kata was beyond my capabilities, the stances were wrong, the techniques abysmal, the power nonexistent, I was not worthy of 9th kyu let alone 1st kyu. I felt like superman, (no I don't wear my undies over my Gi, well not in public anyway) attached to a block of kryptonite robbing me of all my powers. This must true as I realized that by uttering those words "you are now a 1st kyu" my sensei had mysteriously robbed me of all my powers and capabilities. This was something that had only ever happened to me. and no one else, my sensei had somehow chosen me to rob of all my skills to thwart me in my endeavors to become a Dan grade. If I trained hard 7 days a week for the next 10 years I might if I am lucky be ready to attempt a Dan grading.

It is now July and things do not seem to be getting any better, except for one fact, I have finally plucked up the courage to talk about this mysterious event to my peers who not too long ago successfully passed their Dan gradings. They have unanimously assured me that upon hearing those fateful words "you are now a 1st kyu" they too suffered the same fate. Hope at last, and I have been prompted by these events to write this article, not for fame, fortune or even sympathy, but to warn all the budding 1st kyu's that this mysterious curse will strike them down, but do not fight it and become disheartened, it is something that cannot be avoided or prevented, embrace it in the knowledge that you are not alone, and the cure is a simple one. Mix together a large measure of perseverance, a giant portion of hard work and a good level of faith in your sensei and yourself, and together you will I have been assured overcome this 1st kyu curse and be all the better for it.

"May the force be with you, live long and prosper."