

AI-Generated Graded Readers

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Publication webpage:

https://www1.gifu-u.ac.jp/~masaru/a1/ai-generated_graded_readers.html

Publication date: March 21, 2026

About This Edition

This book is a simplified English adaptation created for extensive reading practice.

The text was translated from Japanese into English and simplified using ChatGPT for intermediate English learners as part of an educational project.

Target reading level: CEFR A2-B1

The adaptation aims to improve readability while preserving the narrative content and spirit of the original work.

Source Text

Original work: Urashima Tarō (浦島太郎), Tawara Tōda (田原藤太), Issun-bōshi (一寸法師), Kintarō (金太郎), Ōeyama (大江山), Rashōmon (羅生門), Matsuyama Kagami (松山鏡), Nezumi no Yomeiri (ねずみの嫁入り), Neko no Sōshi (猫の草紙), Kurage no Otsukai (くらげのお使い), Bunbuku Chagama (文福茶がま), Hanasaka Jiji (花咲かじい), Kobutori (瘤とり), Momotarō (桃太郎), Saru Kani Gassen (猿かに合戦), Shitakiri Suzume (舌切りすずめ), Kachikachi Yama (かちかち山)

Author: Kusuyama Masao (楠山正雄)

Source: Aozora Bunko (青空文庫)

<https://www.aozora.gr.jp/>

Original Japanese text available at:

<https://www.aozora.gr.jp/cards/000329/card3390.html> (Urashima Tarō)

<https://www.aozora.gr.jp/cards/000329/card18338.html> (Tawara Tōda)

<https://www.aozora.gr.jp/cards/000329/card43457.html> (Issun-bōshi)

<https://www.aozora.gr.jp/cards/000329/card18337.html> (Kintarō)

<https://www.aozora.gr.jp/cards/000329/card18339.html> (Ōeyama)

<https://www.aozora.gr.jp/cards/000329/card18340.html> (Rashōmon)

<https://www.aozora.gr.jp/cards/000329/card33214.html> (Matsuyama Kagami)

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<https://www.aozora.gr.jp/cards/000329/card18379.html> (Kurage no Otsukai)

<https://www.aozora.gr.jp/cards/000329/card18336.html> (Bunbuku Chagama)

<https://www.aozora.gr.jp/cards/000329/card3391.html> (Hanasaka Jiji)

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<https://www.aozora.gr.jp/cards/000329/card18377.html> (Kachikachi Yama)

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Kusuyama Masao, *Selected Japanese Fairy Tales (from the New Edition of Japanese Fairy Tales: A Treasury [Nihon Dōwa Hōgyokushu], Volumes One and Two)* (Simplified Edition, Adapted and Simplified from the Japanese by ChatGPT)

Urashima Tarō

Part 1

Long ago, in the country of Tango, there was a small village by the sea. In that village lived a young fisherman named Urashima Tarō. Every morning he woke early, before the sun was high, and went down to the shore with his fishing rod on his shoulder. The air there was cool, and the smell of salt came from the wide blue water. He worked hard every day because he had to care for his old father and mother. He was not a rich man, but he was kind, quiet, and strong.

His life was simple, and most days were much the same. He pushed his little boat out over the wet sand, climbed in, and rowed into the morning light. Sometimes the sea was calm like glass, and sometimes the wind moved it into small shining waves. He caught sea bream, bonito, and other fish, and when he was lucky, he came home with enough to sell and enough to eat. He never complained about hard work, because he loved the sea and knew that his parents waited for him. When evening came, he returned tired, but his heart was at peace.

One day, after fishing from morning until late afternoon, Urashima rowed back to land with a fair catch. The sky was turning soft with the light of the falling sun, and the road near the shore was warm and dusty. He lifted his basket and began to walk home in his usual quiet way. But before he had gone very far, he heard loud voices ahead of him. There was laughing, shouting, and the sharp sound of children running about. Urashima stopped and looked forward with surprise.

A group of boys had gathered in the road, five or six of them, all full of wild excitement. They were bending over something on the ground, pushing and pulling and crying out to one another. Urashima came closer and saw what had

made them so noisy. In the middle of the children was a small turtle. It had been caught and turned over again and again, and the boys were playing with it in a cruel way. One poked it with a stick, another struck its shell with a stone, and another kicked sand over its head and feet.

The little turtle moved its legs helplessly and tried to hide its head, but there was nowhere to go. Its dark eyes seemed full of fear. Urashima felt sorry at once, and his face grew serious. He stepped forward and said, "That is enough. You must not do such a cruel thing. It is a poor little creature. Let it go." His voice was calm, but there was strength in it. For a moment the boys looked at him, but they were not ashamed.

"Why should we stop?" one boy said. "It is only a turtle." Another laughed and turned the turtle onto its back again. A third boy pressed it into the sand with his foot while the others shouted and clapped. Urashima watched this and felt even more pity. He knew that words alone would not change their minds. The boys did not hate the turtle for any reason. They were only enjoying its suffering, and that made the scene even sadder.

Urashima thought quickly. He did not want to fight with children, and he did not want the turtle to suffer one moment longer. So he spoke to them in a gentler tone and said, "If you truly want it, then sell it to me. I will give you money for it. Take the coins and buy yourselves something sweet." At that, the boys suddenly became quiet. Their eyes moved from the turtle to Urashima's face, then down to his hands. Their cruel game had already begun to lose its charm, and money sounded better.

"Will you really pay for it?" one of them asked. "Yes," said Urashima, "I will pay. But you must hand it over now." The boys laughed again, but this time their laughter was light and pleased. They held out their hands, and Urashima gave them the coins he had with him. At once they forgot the turtle and snatched the money happily. "Thank you, mister," they cried. "Buy another one next time!" Then they ran off down the road in a noisy group, leaving dust rising behind them.

At last the little turtle was safe. Urashima bent down and lifted it carefully in both hands. Its shell was still rough with sand, and its small neck came slowly out

as if it could not yet believe the danger was over. Urashima brushed the sand away and gently touched the top of its shell. "Poor thing," he said softly. "That was a terrible time for you. You do not belong on the road. Come, I will take you back to the sea." His voice was warm, almost like the voice of a father speaking to a frightened child.

He carried the turtle all the way to the shore instead of leaving it nearby. The sea was now deep blue under the late light, and small waves came in and broke with a quiet sound around his feet. Urashima walked into the shallow water and lowered the turtle with great care. For a moment it stayed there, half in the water, as if resting. Then it moved its head, stretched its legs, and looked strangely happy. It seemed almost to bow before slipping forward into the sea.

Urashima watched it go. The turtle swam farther and farther, making little circles in the water as the evening light shone around it. At last it sank below the surface, and only a few bubbles rose up and broke. Urashima stood there for a while, looking out over the open water. He felt tired from the day, but also glad, because he had saved a weak creature from pain. Then he turned at last and started for home, not knowing that this small act of kindness would soon change his whole life.

Part 2

Two or three days later, Urashima Tarō went out to sea again. He rowed farther than usual, into the open water where the shore looked small and pale behind him. The morning was clear, and the sun shone on the waves in long white lines. He dropped his line and worked hard, watching the water and waiting for the pull of fish. All around him there was only the wide sea and the sound of his small boat moving over it.

As he was fishing, he suddenly heard a voice behind him. "Urashima-san, Urashima-san," it called. He turned at once and looked across the shining water, but there was no boat and no person anywhere near him. For a moment he thought he had imagined it. Then he looked down beside the boat and saw a turtle

swimming there, close to the wood. It raised its head and looked up at him with calm, bright eyes.

Urashima stared in surprise, and the turtle spoke again. "I am the turtle you saved the other day," it said. "I came today to thank you for your kindness." Urashima was greatly amazed, but he was not afraid. The voice of the turtle was gentle and polite, and somehow it seemed natural in that strange moment on the sea. He smiled a little and said, "You did not need to come so far only to thank me."

"But I wished to do more than speak my thanks," said the turtle. "Tell me, have you ever seen the Palace of the Dragon King under the sea?" Urashima answered, "No. I have heard stories about it, but I have never seen it." The turtle moved a little closer and said, "Then please let me take you there as a sign of my thanks." Urashima laughed in wonder and said, "That sounds fine, but the palace is under the sea. I cannot swim so far down."

"That is no trouble," said the turtle. "Please ride on my back." With that, it lifted itself a little above the water. Urashima felt half doubtful, because the idea was strange, but his heart was full of wonder, and he wanted to see this place with his own eyes. So he carefully climbed from the boat and sat on the turtle's broad shell. The turtle turned at once and began to swim strongly forward.

It cut through the waves with great speed, and the boat and the upper sea were soon left behind. The sound of the wind grew faint, and the blue water around them became deeper and deeper in color. Urashima felt as if he were being carried into a dream. At last the place around him suddenly grew bright, and a white road like shining sand stretched ahead. Beyond it stood a grand gate, and farther back rose roofs that glittered like gold and silver in the clear light under the sea.

"We have arrived at the Dragon Palace," said the turtle. It let Urashima down gently and asked him to wait there a little. Then it passed through the gate and disappeared inside. Urashima stood alone and looked around in silent wonder. Everything seemed bright and still, yet full of life, as if the whole sea were breathing softly around him. Before long the turtle returned and said, "Please come this way."

It led him inside the palace grounds. As he walked, many sea creatures looked at him with curious eyes. Sea bream, flat fish, and many other kinds of fish moved aside to let him pass, as though a great guest had come among them. Then a beautiful princess appeared with many ladies attending her. This was Otohime, and she had come out herself to welcome him.

Otohime bowed with great grace and said, “Urashima-san, welcome. You saved the life of the turtle the other day, and I thank you from my heart. We have little to offer, but please rest here and enjoy yourself.” Urashima followed her farther into the palace. Above him were shining ceilings, and around him stood red coral pillars. The floors and halls seemed to glow, and a sweet smell drifted through the air while gentle music came from somewhere deep within the palace.

Soon they entered a great hall with walls that shone like crystal and were covered with many jewels. There Otohime received him with even greater honor, and a feast began at once. Sea bream, bonito, puffer fish, shrimp, octopus, and many other sea creatures brought rare food in great amounts. The young ladies sang songs and danced beautifully, and cups of drink were set before him again and again. Urashima felt as though he were dreaming inside another dream.

After the feast, Otohime showed him through the palace. Every room was filled with treasures, and each one seemed more beautiful than the last. Then she said, “Now I will show you the four seasons,” and opened one door after another. Behind the eastern door was spring, full of soft light and blooming cherry trees. Behind the southern door was summer, with green leaves, flowers, insects singing, and shining drops of water. Behind the western door was autumn, rich with bright leaves, fine flowers, sweet scent, and the sad cry of deer. Behind the northern door was winter, where frost glittered and snow lay white over fields and hills. Urashima looked and looked until his head felt light, and at last he forgot everything else in his wonder.

Part 3

After that, Urashima Tarō stayed in the Dragon Palace and forgot the passing

of time. Every day seemed full of beauty, and every hour brought some new wonder before his eyes. If he walked in one hall, music greeted him. If he turned into another room, there were rare treasures, soft curtains, and bright jewels shining like stars. When he went into the garden, the flowers were fresh, the air was sweet, and everything seemed to smile upon him.

Otohime and her ladies were always kind to him. They spoke gently, laughed with him, and prepared fine meals and pleasant games. Sometimes they danced before him in bright robes that moved like light on water. Sometimes they sang songs so soft and clear that Urashima sat still and listened with his whole heart. Day after day he lived in happiness, and there seemed to be no care, no pain, and no old age in that place.

Because of this, Urashima no longer thought about the village by the sea. He did not think of the little boat that waited on the shore, or the road home under the evening sky. He did not think of his poor house, or of the smoke rising from its roof, or of the small meals he had eaten with his father and mother. The palace was too beautiful, and its joy covered his mind like a bright cloud. He felt as if he had stepped outside the world of ordinary people.

But no joy stays unchanged forever in the heart of man. One day, after he had lived there for what seemed to him only a short time, the thought of home suddenly came back. It came quietly at first, like a wind moving through leaves, but soon it grew stronger and stronger. He remembered his old father and mother waiting for him and wondering why he did not return. At once his heart became heavy, and the shining halls no longer seemed enough to hold him.

He went to Otohime and said, "Princess, I have been very happy here, and I thank you for more kindness than I can ever repay. But I must now go back to my home. My father and mother are old, and I have been away from them too long. They will surely be grieving for me." Otohime looked at him with surprise, and her bright face grew sad. For a little while she said nothing at all.

Then she spoke in a low voice and said, "Why do you wish to leave this place? If you stay here, there will be music, beauty, and joy every day. There is no sorrow in this palace, and I will do all I can to make you happy." Urashima listened, and

her words were sweet, but he could not change his mind. "I know your kindness," he answered. "Still, I must go home, if only for a little while. I cannot forget my parents."

Otohime lowered her eyes, and it seemed that she understood there was no way to stop him. At last she said, "If you must go, then I will not hold you here by force. But I have something for you, and you must keep it with great care." She ordered one of her ladies to bring a beautiful box. It was a small box, but very fine, and it shone as if made with precious work beyond anything in the human world.

Otohime placed the box in Urashima's hands and said, "This is for you. Take it with you when you leave. But you must never open it, no matter what happens." Urashima was surprised and asked, "Never open it? Not even once?" Otohime shook her head. "Never," she said. "If you value me, if you remember this palace, and if you wish for your own good, then do not open it." Urashima did not understand her reason, but he saw how serious she was, so he bowed and answered, "I promise. I will not open it."

When all was ready, the turtle came once more to carry him back. Otohime and many ladies went with Urashima as far as the gate of the palace. There they stood in rows and watched him with sad faces. Otohime herself came nearer than the others and said, "Please do not forget us." Urashima held the box tightly and said, "I will never forget this place, nor your kindness." Then, with a heart divided between sorrow and gratitude, he climbed onto the turtle's back.

The turtle swam upward through the clear sea with the same strong speed as before. The bright palace sank away behind them, and the white road and shining gate slowly disappeared from sight. Soon the deep water around him grew lighter, and at last the sound of waves and wind came back again. When Urashima saw the wide sea under the open sky, he felt as though he had woken from a long, strange dream. Yet the box in his hands told him that what he had seen had been real.

Before long they came to the shore where he had once lived and worked. Urashima stepped down from the turtle's back and stood again on the land of men.

The turtle looked up at him for a moment, as if saying farewell without words, and then slipped away into the sea. Urashima watched it until it was gone, and then he turned toward the village with the box under his arm. He believed that only a few days had passed, and he hurried forward, eager to see his home again.

Part 4

Urashima Tarō walked quickly toward the village, holding the beautiful box carefully under his arm. His heart was full of eager thoughts, and he imagined the joy on his father's and mother's faces when they saw him return. He believed that he had been away only a few days, or at most a short little while. But as he came nearer, a strange feeling slowly entered his mind. The road did not look quite the same as he remembered it.

At first he thought the evening light was playing a trick on his eyes. Yet the farther he walked, the more clearly he felt that something was wrong. Houses stood where he did not remember them, and places he had known well seemed changed or lost. The people who passed him were all strangers, and none of them looked at him with the face of an old friend. Some glanced at him with surprise, but then went on without a word.

"This is very strange," Urashima said to himself. "How can so much have changed in only a few days?" He quickened his steps and turned toward the place where his own house should have been. But when he reached it, he stopped as if struck by a blow. There was no house there at all. The place was empty, and there was not even a clear sign that his home had once stood on that ground.

For a long moment he could only stare. Then he began to walk around the place in confusion, looking this way and that, as though the house might suddenly appear if he chose the right path. But there was nothing. No fence, no roof, no garden, and no smoke rising into the evening air. "Father," he whispered. "Mother." The quiet around him felt cold and deep.

While he stood there in his trouble, an old woman came slowly along the road with a stick in her hand. Her back was bent, and her steps were small and careful.

Urashima hurried to her and said, "Please tell me, where is the house of Urashima Tarō? My father and mother lived here." The old woman looked at him closely with weak, wondering eyes. "Urashima Tarō?" she said. "I have never heard of such a man."

Urashima was greatly disturbed and answered, "That cannot be true. I myself am Urashima Tarō, and I lived in this village." The old woman kept looking at him, and for some time she said nothing. Then at last she nodded slowly and said, "Ah, now I remember an old story I heard when I was a child. Long, long ago there was said to be a fisherman of this village named Urashima Tarō. One day he went out to sea and never came back."

She spoke on in her quiet old voice while Urashima stood like a man in a dream. "People said many things," she continued. "Some said he was drowned. Others said he went to the Palace of the Dragon King under the sea. But that was a story from very ancient days. It happened, they say, three hundred years ago." Having said this, she moved on down the road, leaving him behind in silence.

Urashima could hardly breathe. "Three hundred years," he said again and again, as if the words had no meaning. He had thought he had spent only a short time in the Dragon Palace, yet in the world of men three hundred years had passed away. Then he understood why the village had changed, why no one knew him, and why his father and mother were nowhere to be found. A great sadness fell over him, and the bright memory of the palace suddenly became more painful than sweet.

He turned and went back toward the shore with slow, uncertain steps. The sea was still there, wide and shining, just as it had always been, and the waves came in with the same sound as before. But no turtle rose from the water, and no road of white sand opened below the surface. However long he looked, he could not see any sign of the Dragon Palace. He had no way to return to that place, and no place left for him in the world of men.

Then, in his sorrow, he remembered the box that Otohime had given him. "Perhaps this will help me," he thought. "Perhaps if I open it, I may learn what to do." In that unhappy moment he forgot the princess's warning and forgot the promise he had made. His hands trembled, but he lifted the lid. At once a soft

purple cloud rose up from inside and drifted around him in the air.

Urashima watched in fear and wonder as the cloud wrapped itself about his body and then faded away. In the next moment his hair turned white, deep lines came over his face, and his hands and feet grew thin and weak. His back bent, and all the strength of youth left him. Looking at his shadow in the water by the shore, he saw not the young fisherman he had been, but a very old man. Then he understood that the box had held the years of his life, kept safe while he lived in the Dragon Palace.

The evening sea stretched far away under the dimming sky, quiet and endless before his eyes. Somewhere, as if from a great distance, he thought he heard a sweet song, like the songs of the palace under the water. He stood there, old and alone, and remembered the kindness of Otohime, the shining halls, and the home that had vanished from the earth. Between the lost world of the sea and the lost world of men, there was now no place where he could truly return. So he remained by the shore, thinking of the long-vanished past, while the waves came in and went out without end.

Tawara Tōda

Part 1

Long ago, in the province of Ōmi, there lived a warrior named Tawara Tōda. He was brave, strong, and known as a man who did not lose his courage easily. One day he was traveling across the Seta Bridge, which stretched over the water of the great lake. The day was quiet, and he was walking on in an ordinary way. But before he had crossed very far, he saw something terrible lying across the bridge.

A huge serpent had made a great circle of its body on the bridge and was sleeping there. It was so large that it seemed as long as twenty jō, and it blocked the whole road. Its two eyes shone like bright mirrors in the light. Between its sharp teeth, which stood like rows of swords, its red tongue moved in and out like a small flame. Any common man would have fainted at such a sight, or run away at once in fear.

But Tawara Tōda did not run. He looked at the great serpent with a calm face and kept walking straight ahead. Then, without hurry and without fear, he stepped onto the serpent's back and passed over its body as if it were only part of the road. He did not even look behind him at first. He simply went on across the bridge with the steady steps of a fearless man. The wind moved over the water below, but Tōda's heart did not shake.

After he had gone some distance, he suddenly heard a voice behind him. "Please wait a moment," it said. Tōda stopped and turned around at once. To his great surprise, the huge serpent had disappeared completely. In its place sat a small man in blue clothing, bowing deeply and respectfully to him.

Tōda looked at the strange little man and said, "Was it you who called to me?" The man bowed again and answered, "Yes, it was I. I have a most important request, and I beg you to hear me." Tōda still watched him carefully and said, "I may listen. But first tell me who you are." The small man lowered his head once more and spoke in a quiet, serious voice.

“I am the Dragon King who has long lived in this lake,” he said. Tōda answered, “So that great serpent on the bridge was your form.” “Yes,” said the Dragon King. “I lay there because I wished to find a truly brave man, but everyone who saw me ran away in terror.” Then Tōda asked, “And what is the trouble that has brought you to such a state?” At that question, the Dragon King’s face grew dark with worry.

“For two thousand years,” he said, “I have lived in this lake in peace. But for some time now a giant centipede has lived on Mount Mikami over there. It comes down and attacks this lake again and again. Each time it comes, it takes away one of my children.” As he spoke, he turned his hand toward the dark shape of the mountain in the distance, and his voice shook with grief.

He went on, “I have long wished to destroy this enemy, but it is too powerful. They say its body can wind seven times and a half around Mount Mikami itself. If we fight it with our own strength, we cannot hope to win. Yet if we do nothing, all my children will be taken, and at last even I myself may be destroyed.” He raised his eyes to Tōda and said, “That is why I have been waiting on the bridge, hoping to meet a warrior strong enough to help us.”

Then the Dragon King bowed deeply and said, “When I saw you step over my body without fear, I knew at once that you were no ordinary man. Please, I beg you, defeat the great centipede for us.” Tawara Tōda was not only brave but also kind and full of pity for the suffering of others. He listened to the Dragon King’s sorrow and felt that he could not refuse. “That is a cruel trouble indeed,” he said. “Very well. I will go at once and destroy this creature for you.”

The Dragon King was overjoyed and thanked him many times. “Then please come with me to my home at the bottom of the lake,” he said. “From there you may watch for the monster, and I will prepare all that is needed.” He led the way down from the bridge and entered the water, cutting through the waves without effort. Tōda followed after him, and instead of drowning or losing his way, he found himself moving safely beneath the lake as if in a strange dream.

After a while, a splendid gate appeared before them, and beyond it stood the roof of a grand palace that seemed covered in gold and silver. They passed along

a road bright as jewels, went through an entrance decorated with coral, and followed long shining halls deep into the palace. From the railing of a great room, Tōda could see through the clear water and look straight toward Mount Mikami. The Dragon King said, “There is still some time before the centipede appears,” and he welcomed Tōda with rich food and every kindness. But as the hours passed and the day slowly darkened, a shadow of fear began to spread across the Dragon King’s face.

Part 2

As the sky grew darker, the face of the Dragon King grew paler. He looked again and again toward Mount Mikami, and his hands did not stay still. At last he whispered, “Now the centipede will soon come.” Tawara Tōda rose at once and took up his bow and arrows. His face was calm, and his voice did not change.

Before long the sky in the distance grew suddenly red, as if fire had been poured across it. Then countless balls of light appeared between the Hira peaks and Mount Mikami. They shone one after another like a long line of torches moving through the dark. Step by step the lights came closer to the lake. The Dragon King shook with fear and cried, “There, just as I said, it is coming. Please defeat it quickly.”

But Tōda answered in a slow, steady voice, “Do not be afraid. I will surely destroy it.” Then he put one foot on the railing, set his first arrow to the string, and pulled the bow with all his strength. He let the arrow fly straight toward the centipede’s head. It struck right in the middle of the creature’s forehead. But at once there was a hard sound, like iron striking iron, and the arrow flew back.

Tōda bit his lip and said, “That was bad.” Without losing time, he took up the second arrow and pulled the bow even harder than before. Again the arrow flew fast and true. Again it struck the giant centipede. But this arrow also bounced back and fell away uselessly.

Now only one arrow remained. The line of fiery lights came nearer and nearer, and the great creature seemed already to be upon them. The Dragon King had almost given up hope and lay as if dead with fear. In that very moment, Tōda

suddenly remembered something he had once heard. He took the last arrow, put its end to his mouth, and wet it with his spit.

Then he set the arrow to the bow and fired. This time the arrow did not fly back. It sank deep into the centipede's forehead, straight and sure. Tōda had remembered that centipedes hated the spit of human beings. Because of that, the last arrow found its mark and did its work.

At once all the countless balls of fire went out together. The dark world shook with a terrible storm, and thunder began to roll across the sky. Wind rushed over the lake, and the palace itself seemed to tremble. The Dragon King and all his people threw themselves to the floor and covered their heads. No one could do anything but wait for the violence to end.

After a long time the thunder stopped. The storm slowly died away, and the summer night began to grow pale with dawn. Mount Mikami stood quiet again, with a soft purple shadow under the early sky. On the water below, the dead body of the giant centipede floated and moved with the waves. Then all knew that the danger had truly passed.

The Dragon King leaped up in joy and thanked Tōda again and again. "Because of you," he said, "from this night on we may sleep in peace." He ordered a great feast at once. Many dishes were brought out, and songs were sung, and dances were performed by the women of the palace. The whole place that had been full of fear only a little before now shone with happiness.

When the feast was over, Tōda said that he must return home. The Dragon King tried in many ways to keep him there longer, but Tōda would not change his mind. So at last the Dragon King said, "Then please accept these poor gifts as a sign of my thanks." He ordered his servants to bring out one bale of rice, one roll of silk, and one great temple bell. These gifts were placed before Tōda, and servants carried them for him as the Dragon King himself went with him as far as the foot of the Seta Bridge.

The gifts were all wonderful things. No matter how much rice was taken from the bale, it never became empty. No matter how much silk was cut from the roll, it never grew smaller. And when the bell was struck, its fine high sound could be

heard all through the land of Ōmi. Tōda gave the bell to the temple of Miidera, kept the rice and silk in his house, and from that time on he and his family lived in lasting plenty and peace.

Issun-bōshi

Part 1

Long ago, in a place called Naniwa in the land of Settsu, there lived a husband and wife. They were honest people and lived quietly together, but they had one sorrow in their home. They had no child. Year after year passed, and still no baby was born to them. Because of this, their hearts were often sad, even when the days were bright.

Again and again they went to pray at the shrine of Sumiyoshi Myōjin. They bowed deeply and begged with all their hearts. “Please give us one child,” they said. “Even if the child is only as small as a finger, we will still be thankful.” They prayed so earnestly that there were tears in their eyes. They asked not for wealth or fame, but only for a child to love.

Before long, their prayer was answered. The wife became with child, and the husband and wife were filled with joy. Every day they wondered when the baby would come. They spoke of it from morning to night, and they waited with eager hearts. When at last the child was born, they looked closely and gave a cry of surprise.

It was a little baby boy, but he was truly no bigger than a finger. The husband and wife looked at one another and then began to laugh with wonder. “We asked for a child as small as a finger,” they said, “and the god has really given us one just that small.” Strange as it was, they loved the boy at once. They held him carefully, watched over him, and raised him with great tenderness.

Yet as time passed, the child did not grow. When he was five, he was still no bigger. When he was seven, nothing changed. Even after he was more than ten years old, he was still the same tiny size. At last his parents gave him the name Issun-bōshi, because he was only one sun tall.

When Issun-bōshi walked through the streets, the children of the neighborhood gathered around him. They pointed at him and laughed. “Look, the tiny one is walking,” they cried. “Be careful, or someone will step on you.” Some called him

names, and some made fun of him more cruelly. But Issun-bōshi did not cry or grow angry. He only smiled quietly and went on his way.

Though he was small, he was not weak in spirit. As he grew older, he began to think more and more about his future. He knew that if he stayed in the village, people would only laugh at him forever. Deep inside, he wanted something larger than the life he had known. He wanted to test his luck in the great world and make a name for himself.

When Issun-bōshi was sixteen, he came one day before his father and mother and bowed. "Please give me leave to go," he said. His father was greatly surprised and asked, "Why do you say such a thing?" Issun-bōshi lifted his little face and answered proudly, "I wish to go up to Kyoto." His parents stared at him, for this was no small dream.

"And what will you do in Kyoto?" his father asked. Issun-bōshi replied, "Kyoto is the greatest city in Japan. The Emperor lives there, and there must be many chances for a man to find his fortune. I want to go there and test my luck." His father listened carefully and saw that the boy's heart was already set. So at last he nodded and said, "Very well. If that is your wish, then go."

Issun-bōshi was overjoyed and began to prepare at once. From his mother he received a sewing needle, and he made a sword from it, with a straw sheath and handle. Then he took a new bowl for a boat and a new pair of chopsticks for oars. Everything was tiny, but in his eyes it was a true traveler's equipment. He stood looking at it all with shining eyes, ready at last for the road before him.

At the beach of Sumiyoshi, his father and mother came to see him off. Issun-bōshi climbed into his little bowl boat and called out, "Father, Mother, I am going now." His parents answered, "Stay well, and become a great man." Issun-bōshi replied, "Yes, I will surely rise in the world." Then he pushed out from the shore and began to row away, while his parents stood watching him for as long as they could.

Part 2

Issun-bōshi's little bowl boat moved up the Yodo River day after day. Because the boat was so small, even a strong breath of wind made the water dangerous for him. When rain fell and the river grew fuller, the bowl rocked and spun so badly that it almost turned over. At such times he could do nothing but hide between stone walls or in the shadow of bridge posts and wait. The journey was slow and full of trouble, but he did not lose heart. Each day he told himself that the great city was somewhere ahead.

In this way, after nearly a whole month, he finally reached a place called Toba, not far from Kyoto. When he climbed from the bowl boat onto the bank, the great city was already close before him. Street after street stretched on in long lines, full of movement and noise. Horses passed, carts rolled by, and more people walked there than he had ever seen in all his life. Issun-bōshi had to step carefully to avoid the wooden teeth of their geta sandals. Even while doing so, he looked around with wide eyes and said to himself, "Kyoto truly is the greatest city in Japan."

He walked on and on until he came to Sanjō. There he saw many fine houses standing in rows, but among them one great mansion was more splendid than all the rest. Its gate was high and grand, and everything about it seemed rich and powerful. Issun-bōshi stopped and thought, "If I wish to rise in the world, I must first serve some great lord. This must surely be the house of an important man." So, without fear, he went in through the gate. The gravel road inside was very long, and by the time he reached the great entrance hall, even his small legs were tired.

As it happened, this was the mansion of the Chancellor of Sanjō, a very powerful minister. Standing before the entrance, Issun-bōshi cried out in the loudest voice he could manage, "Please excuse me." But no one came. So he called again, even louder than before, and still no one appeared. At last he shouted a third time with all the strength in his tiny body. Just then the Chancellor himself, who was about to go out, heard the sound and came to the entrance.

The Chancellor looked around in surprise, because at first he could see no visitor at all. Then, after looking more carefully, he noticed a little figure standing proudly in the shadow of some wooden sandals. The tiny man was no bigger than

a bean, yet he stood as straight as a warrior before his lord. The Chancellor blinked and said, “Was that you who called just now?” Issun-bōshi bowed and answered, “Yes, my lord, it was I.” “And who are you?” asked the Chancellor. “I am Issun-bōshi, who has come up from Naniwa,” the little traveler replied.

The Chancellor smiled with great interest and said, “So you truly are Issun-bōshi. And why have you come to my house?” Issun-bōshi bowed again and answered with dignity, “I have come to Kyoto because I wish to make my fortune in the world. Please let me serve here. I will work with all my strength.” Though the Chancellor laughed, he was pleased by the little fellow’s boldness and spirit. “You are an amusing boy,” he said. “Very well. I will keep you in my house.” In that way Issun-bōshi at last found a place in the great world he had come to seek.

From that day on, Issun-bōshi served in the mansion of the Chancellor. His body was small, but he was quick, clever, and always ready to help. He worked hard in every small matter, moving here and there busily and never showing laziness. Because of this, everyone in the house grew fond of him. Servants, attendants, and even people much older than he was called out, “Issun-bōshi, Issun-bōshi,” with warm smiles in their voices. In a short time he became a favorite in the whole household.

In that mansion there was also a young princess, the Chancellor’s daughter, who was about thirteen years old. She was bright and lovely, and Issun-bōshi liked her very much. The princess, too, took great delight in him. Whenever she went anywhere, she called, “Issun-bōshi, Issun-bōshi,” and had him come with her. Because he was so small, so lively, and so clever, she never grew tired of having him near. In time he became less like a servant in her eyes and more like a close little companion.

As the days passed, the two children grew more and more friendly. Since both were still young, they did not always behave with perfect dignity. They talked together, laughed together, and sometimes quarreled over very small things. At times they played tricks on one another, and one would cry while the other laughed. Then, before long, they would make peace and be cheerful again. Their friendship was warm and lively, like the quick changing weather of spring.

For Issun-bōshi, this life in Kyoto was beyond anything he had once imagined in his parents' poor home. He had come to the capital with only a bowl boat, chopstick oars, and a needle sword. Now he lived in a noble house, was trusted by a great lord, and walked at the side of a princess. Yet he did not forget the wish that had first brought him there. Deep in his heart he still hoped that one day he would truly rise in the world and become a man of name and honor.

So Issun-bōshi continued to serve faithfully in the Chancellor's mansion, making himself useful in every way he could. The great city no longer seemed so strange to him, and the rich house that had once filled him with wonder began to feel almost like home. Still, he was young, proud, and full of spirit, and the days ahead were not going to stay quiet for long. A small quarrel, a foolish trick, and a sudden turn of fortune were already drawing near. Before long, the little boy who had come safely to Kyoto would be carried into far stranger danger than he had ever dreamed.

Part 3

After some time had passed, Issun-bōshi and the young princess grew even closer. Because they were both still children, they sometimes forgot to be careful and proud. They laughed together, played small tricks, and from time to time fell into foolish little quarrels. One day they quarreled again, and this time Issun-bōshi felt that he had clearly lost. His pride was hurt, and he wanted to pay the princess back for it in some childish way.

Soon after that, he saw that the princess had fallen asleep in the daytime. Issun-bōshi quietly went near her and looked at the sweets that had been given to him by the lord of the house. Then, in his anger, he ate every one of them himself. When the bag was empty, he took the sweet powder that remained and gently rubbed it beside the sleeping princess's mouth. After that, he carried the empty bag out into the middle of the garden and began to cry in a loud voice on purpose.

His crying was heard by the Chancellor, who came out to the veranda and said, "Issun-bōshi, what is the matter?" Issun-bōshi answered in a sorrowful voice,

“The princess struck me and took all the sweets that my lord had given me.” The Chancellor was shocked and went at once to his daughter’s room. There he saw the princess still asleep, with sweet powder all around her mouth. The sight made him think that Issun-bōshi had spoken the truth.

He grew very angry and called for the princess’s mother. “Why have you let the girl behave in such a shameful way?” he asked sharply. The mother was a somewhat hard-hearted woman, and she was bitterly upset that she herself had been blamed because of her daughter. In her anger she began to add many ugly stories that were not true at all. She said that the princess had long behaved badly and would not listen no matter what she was told. Hearing this, the Chancellor became still more severe.

At last he ordered that the princess should be driven from the house and left somewhere far away. The moment Issun-bōshi heard this, his heart dropped in sorrow. He had only wished to win a little victory in a child’s quarrel, and now a terrible thing had happened because of his own trick. He felt deeply sorry for the princess and decided that he could not leave her alone. He resolved to go with her wherever she was sent and, if possible, take her safely to his parents’ home in Naniwa.

They went down to Toba and got into a boat, hoping to travel away from the city. But before long a fierce storm rose. The wind blew wildly, and the water grew dark and rough beneath them. The boat was driven farther and farther away, first down the river and then out toward the sea. For three days and three nights they were carried helplessly over the waves, with nothing to do but hold on and endure. On the fourth day, at last, they reached an island.

The island was strange and full of wonder. There were flowers and trees there such as neither of them had ever seen or even heard spoken of before. Yet for all its beauty, the place seemed empty of human life. No house stood there, no smoke rose, and no voice of man could be heard. Issun-bōshi led the princess up from the shore, and the two began to walk carefully, looking right and left in search of help.

Suddenly, from nowhere at all, two ogres leaped out before them. Without a

moment's warning they rushed at the princess, as if they meant to swallow her in a single bite. The princess was so frightened that she nearly lost consciousness. But Issun-bōshi at once drew his needle-sword with a bright flash and jumped before the ogres. "Stop," he shouted. "Do you know who this lady is? She is the daughter of the Chancellor of Sanjō. If you dare touch her, Issun-bōshi will not allow it."

The ogres looked down and saw only a tiny fellow like a bean standing there proudly at their feet. They burst out laughing. "What is this little thing?" said one of them. "How troublesome. I will swallow him first." In a moment the ogre picked him up and gulped him down. But Issun-bōshi still held his needle-sword, and once inside the ogre's body he ran everywhere and stabbed sharply again and again. The ogre cried out in pain, rolled on the ground, and at last, with a great gasp, blew Issun-bōshi out through its mouth.

Then Issun-bōshi rushed in again, but the second ogre seized him and swallowed him too. This time the little warrior moved even more cleverly. He sprang up through the throat, found his way into the ogre's head, and stabbed and stabbed until the creature screamed and jumped in terror. Issun-bōshi flew out again, and the ogres, now utterly frightened, turned and ran away without looking back. When they were gone, the princess slowly came to herself, and at that moment a small mallet rolled down from the fold of her robe. Issun-bōshi picked it up and said, "This is the ogres' magic mallet. If we shake it, whatever we wish may appear." He swung it and cried, "Issun-bōshi, grow large, and become of proper height." At once he grew taller, then taller still, and after the third shaking he stood there as a fine full-grown young man. Filled with joy, hungry from many days without food, he next shook out a great feast, and after they had eaten together, he brought forth gold, silver, jewels, and at last a large boat. Loading all the treasures aboard, he and the princess set out and before long returned safely to Japan.

Part 4

When Issun-bōshi returned to Kyoto with the Chancellor's daughter and a great load of treasure, the news spread through the city at once. People talked everywhere about the tiny boy who had become a tall and handsome young man. They said that he had crossed the sea, defeated ogres, and come back alive with gold, silver, and jewels. Such a story was so strange and so wonderful that it soon reached even the ears of the Emperor. Before long, Issun-bōshi was called to appear at court.

When the Emperor saw him, he looked carefully at the young man before him. Issun-bōshi no longer seemed like a mere little servant or a curious child from the provinces. He stood proudly, spoke clearly, and showed a spirit that was both brave and lively. The Emperor thought, "This is no common young man." So he ordered people to look closely into Issun-bōshi's family and learn who he truly was.

The search was made, and in time the truth became known. It was found that Issun-bōshi's grandfather had once been a man of very high rank. His father too was not of low birth, though he had come to live quietly in the country. His mother also came from a good family. When all this was reported, the Emperor understood that Issun-bōshi was a young man of worthy blood as well as worthy courage.

Because of this, the Emperor showed him great favor. He gave Issun-bōshi rank and office, and from that time the young man rose in the world exactly as he had once hoped. The little boy who had left home in a bowl boat was now treated as a noble warrior. People who had once laughed at his size would now have bowed before him. Fortune had turned so greatly that even his own parents would hardly have believed it if they had not seen it with their own eyes.

The Chancellor of Sanjō had also long watched him with growing admiration. He knew Issun-bōshi's brave deeds, and he had seen with his own eyes the young man's good heart. He remembered, too, how closely his daughter and Issun-bōshi had once been tied, even in the days when they were only children. So, after all these things had come to pass, the Chancellor gave his daughter to Issun-bōshi as his wife. In this way the friendship of their younger days became a true marriage.

The princess was very happy, for she had trusted and loved him long before he became tall, rich, or honored. Issun-bōshi also felt deep joy, but with that joy came another thought. He remembered the poor house in Naniwa, the father and mother who had stood on the shore, and the voices that had told him to become a great man. He had indeed risen in the world, just as he had promised. Now he wished to share that happiness with the two people who had first loved him.

So messengers were sent to Naniwa, and his father and mother were invited to Kyoto. When they came and saw their son, they could hardly speak for wonder. They had last seen him as a child no bigger than a finger, standing in a bowl boat with chopsticks for oars. Now before them stood a fine young nobleman in rich clothing, honored by the Emperor and joined in marriage with the Chancellor's daughter. Tears came into their eyes, and their hearts were full.

Issun-bōshi welcomed them with great kindness and respect. He did not forget the years when they had prayed for him, cared for him, and encouraged him when others laughed. He had treasure enough now, and a high place in the world, but he valued his parents more than any of those things. He brought them into his house and had them live close to him. In that way, the old sorrow of their childless life was turned at last into lasting happiness.

After this, all the people of the house gathered often together in peace. The Chancellor looked with satisfaction on his daughter and son-in-law. Issun-bōshi's father and mother saw their son honored and loved, and they felt that the gods had answered their prayer more fully than they had ever dreamed. The young wife remembered the tiny companion who had once walked beside her in the halls of the mansion, and she smiled to think how strange the path of life had been. Even Issun-bōshi himself sometimes seemed amazed when he thought of the road from Sumiyoshi to Kyoto, from needle-sword to court rank, and from a bowl boat to such fortune.

Thus Issun-bōshi lived long and happily after many dangers and wonders. The boy who had been no bigger than a finger proved that a small body does not mean a small heart. By courage, cleverness, and the help of good fortune, he rose high in the world and fulfilled the hope he had carried from childhood. His parents

were brought to honor, the princess became his wife, and his name was spoken with respect. So the strange little child of Naniwa came at last to a bright and joyful end.

Kintarō

Part 1

Long ago, in the deep mountains of Ashigara in the land of Sagami, there lived a boy named Kintarō. He was born there and grew up far from towns and roads, in a lonely place among trees, rocks, and streams. He lived with his mother, a mountain woman, in a small house hidden deep in the hills. Their life was simple, but the mountain around them was wide and full of life. From the beginning, Kintarō belonged to that wild world as naturally as the wind and rain.

Kintarō was strong from the very time he was born. As he grew, his strength became so great that even grown men could not match him. When he was only seven or eight years old, he could lift a stone mill or a heavy straw bag without much trouble. If he wrestled with ordinary adults, he usually threw them down with ease. At last there was almost no one nearby who could serve as a proper match for him. Because of this, he often grew restless and went off into the woods to amuse himself.

He liked to walk through the forest with a great woodman's axe over his shoulder. When he found a large cedar or pine tree, he sometimes cut it down just for the fun of it, pretending that he was a grown lumberman at work. The sound of the axe rang through the mountain air, and birds flew up from the branches in surprise. Kintarō loved to test his power and see what his body could do. He did not think of himself as strange. To him, such things felt natural.

One day he went farther than usual, deep into the heart of the forest. There, as he was cutting a great tree in his usual lively way, a huge bear came out from among the woods. Its body was broad and heavy, and its eyes flashed angrily. It glared at Kintarō and roared, "Who is this that is ruining my forest?" Then it came forward as if it meant to attack him at once.

But Kintarō was not frightened in the least. He threw down his axe and cried, "What is this? Only a bear, and you do not even know Kintarō?" Then he rushed straight at the great animal. Before the bear could do more than raise its paws,

Kintarō had seized it and thrown it heavily to the ground. The bear was shocked and defeated at once. It put both forepaws down humbly, admitted that it had lost, and became Kintarō's follower from that day on.

When the other animals of the mountain saw that even the great bear had yielded to Kintarō, they too came near him one after another. A rabbit, a monkey, and a deer followed after the bear and said, "Kintarō, please let us also become your followers." Kintarō only nodded cheerfully and said, "Very well, very well." He did not act proud or cruel. He simply accepted them all, and in this way he became the little leader of the mountain creatures.

After that, Kintarō went out each morning with many rice balls that his mother had made for him. When he reached the forest, he put his fingers to his mouth and blew a whistle. "Come, all of you. Come, all of you," he called. Then the bear appeared first, and after it came the deer, the monkey, and the rabbit, each making its way through the trees. With these followers around him, Kintarō spent whole days walking through the mountain, playing, shouting, and laughing freely.

One day, after they had wandered from place to place, they came to a spot where soft grass grew thick under the warm sun. The animals stretched themselves out there and rested happily. Kintarō looked at them and said, "Now then, wrestle with one another. I will give rice balls as prizes." At once the bear used its big paws to scrape up a ring in the earth, making a wrestling ground. Everything was ready in a moment, and the games began.

First the monkey and the rabbit wrestled while the deer acted as judge. The rabbit caught hold of the monkey's tail and tried to drag him out of the ring, but the monkey, angry at this, grabbed the rabbit's long ears and pulled so hard that the rabbit cried out in pain and let go. Because of that, the match ended without a winner, and neither of them got a prize. Then the rabbit became judge, and the deer faced the bear. But the deer was no match for such a powerful creature and was quickly thrown down.

Kintarō clapped his hands and laughed with delight. At last he himself stood in the middle of the ring and spread his arms wide. "Come on, all of you. Attack me," he cried. One by one the rabbit, the monkey, the deer, and finally the bear rushed

in, but Kintarō tossed each of them aside as if they weighed almost nothing. Then he laughed again and said, “What is this? You are all weak. Come at me all together.”

The animals, now full of shame and excitement, all attacked at once. The rabbit clung to one leg, the monkey grabbed at his neck, the deer pushed at his waist, and the bear threw its whole body against his chest. All together they strained and struggled, trying with all their strength to bring him down. But Kintarō would not fall. At last he grew impatient, shook his body once with force, and in a single moment sent them all rolling out of the ring together.

“Ah, that hurts. Ah, that hurts,” they cried, rubbing their shoulders and backs. Kintarō felt sorry for them then and said, “Well, it is sad that you all lost to me. I will divide the rice balls among everyone.” He made them sit in a circle around him while he sat in the middle and shared the food fairly. After they had all eaten, Kintarō said, “That was good. Now let us go home.” So he rose and led his animal followers back through the mountain paths, with the late light falling softly through the trees.

Part 2

On the way home, Kintarō and his animal followers did not go straight back at once. They ran through the forest, played tag among the rocks, and laughed loudly as they moved down the mountain paths. The air was cool under the trees, and now and then a bird flew up from the branches at their noise. They were all tired from wrestling, but they were still full of life and joy. So they kept playing as they went, without thinking about danger or difficulty ahead.

After some time, they came to the edge of a great mountain stream. The water rushed by with a loud, deep sound, and white foam leaped here and there over the rocks. But there was no bridge across it. The bear, the deer, the monkey, and the rabbit all stopped at once and looked troubled. “What shall we do?” they asked. “Must we turn back?”

Kintarō alone showed no fear at all. He looked around calmly, as if the matter

were very small. Then his eyes fell on a huge cedar tree standing near the bank. Without a word, he threw down his axe, went to the tree, and seized it with both hands. He pushed once, then again, and then with even greater force a third time.

At once a terrible cracking sound came through the air. The great tree bent, broke loose, and crashed down over the rushing stream. In a moment it lay across the water like a fine bridge. Kintarō picked up his axe again, set it proudly on his shoulder, and walked across first. The others followed behind him, all whispering, “What great strength. What wonderful strength.”

But they were not the only ones who had seen this. On a rock on the farther side of the stream, a woodcutter had been hiding and watching everything. When he saw Kintarō throw down such a great tree as if it were nothing, he opened his eyes wide in amazement. “What a strange boy,” he said to himself. “Whose child can he be?” Then he quietly rose and began to follow after Kintarō.

After some time, Kintarō parted from the rabbit, the monkey, the deer, and the bear. Then he went on alone, lightly crossing little valleys and moving along steep places until he came at last to the deep hidden mountain house where he lived with his mother. White clouds seemed to gather around the lonely place. The woodcutter, far less light of foot, had to climb over roots and cling to rocks to keep up. At last he reached the house and peered inside.

There he saw Kintarō sitting by the hearth, eagerly telling his mother about the wrestling with the animals. She listened with a smiling face, full of warm pleasure in her son. Suddenly the stranger pushed his head in at the window and said, “Boy, now wrestle with me.” Then he came inside and held out one large rough hand toward Kintarō. The mountain woman looked surprised, but Kintarō only laughed and held out his own plump little hand at once.

The two pushed against each other for some time, both with red faces and great force. Yet neither could clearly defeat the other. At last the woodcutter suddenly drew back and said, “Let us stop. There will be no end to this.” Then he sat down properly, bowed politely to Kintarō’s mother, and explained why he had come. He said that he had seen the boy push down the great cedar by the stream and had followed him here in astonishment.

Then the stranger turned to Kintarō and said, “Boy, would you like to go to the capital and become a samurai?” Kintarō’s eyes opened wide, and his whole face brightened. “Yes,” he cried. “It would be wonderful to become a samurai.” The stranger then revealed that he was no common woodcutter at all, but Usui Sadamitsu, a retainer of the famous lord Minamoto no Raikō. He had been traveling through the land under his master’s order, searching for strong warriors.

When Kintarō’s mother heard this, she was overjoyed. She said, “Kintarō’s late father was also a samurai of the good Sakata family. Because of unhappy reasons, we have had to live hidden in these mountains. But I have long wished that, if the chance came, my son might go to the capital, become a true warrior, and carry on his father’s name.” Kintarō danced with delight beside them and cried again and again, “I am going to be a samurai. I am going to be a samurai.”

When the day of parting came, the bear, the deer, the monkey, and the rabbit all came together to say farewell. Kintarō gently stroked each head in turn and said, “All of you, stay friendly and play well together.” The animals answered sadly, “We will miss you greatly. Please become a great general soon and come show us your face again.” Then Kintarō bowed before his mother, followed Sadamitsu down from the mountain, and after many days reached the capital. There Sadamitsu took him before Lord Raikō, who looked at the strong boy with pleasure and said, “Kintarō is not a fitting name for a samurai. Since your father was of the Sakata family, from now on call yourself Sakata no Kintoki.” So Kintarō became Sakata no Kintoki, entered Raikō’s service, and later grew into one of the famous Four Heavenly Kings beside Watanabe no Tsuna, Urabe no Suetake, and Usui Sadamitsu.

Ōeyama

Part 1

Long ago, there was a great warrior named Minamoto no Raikō. Under him served four famous strong men: Watanabe no Tsuna, Urabe no Suetake, Usui Sadamitsu, and Sakata no Kintoki. People called them the Four Heavenly Kings of Raikō, and their names were known widely. In those same days, however, fear had fallen over the capital. In the mountains of Ōeyama there lived a terrible ogre named Shuten Dōji, and again and again he came down from the hills to the city of Kyoto.

He did not come like an ordinary robber. He stole children from houses across the city and carried them away into the mountains. He kept them near him and made them serve him as long as he pleased. Then, when he had no more use for them, he killed and ate them. Because of this, fathers and mothers in Kyoto lived in fear, and people looked at the dark hills with trembling hearts whenever evening came.

One day an even sadder thing happened. The only daughter of a nobleman named Ikeda Chūnagon suddenly vanished. Her father and mother were struck with grief, and the whole house fell into tears and confusion. They searched, asked questions, and tried every means they knew, but the young lady could not be found. At last they called for a skillful diviner, and he said, “There is no doubt. The princess has been taken by the ogre of Ōeyama.”

As soon as he heard this, Chūnagon went up to the palace and reported everything to the Emperor. He told how his precious daughter had been taken and begged with all his heart that the ogre should be destroyed without delay. “Please save not only my child,” he said, “but all the parents of the capital from this sorrow.” The Emperor pitied him greatly and asked the ministers, “Is there any warrior who can defeat the ogre of Ōeyama?” The ministers answered at once, “If anyone can do it, it is surely Raikō and the warriors who serve under him.”

So Raikō was called before the Emperor and received the order. He bowed and

returned home in silence, but once alone, he did not rush carelessly into action. He knew that this enemy was no common enemy of flesh and blood. Shuten Dōji was a creature of strange power, one who could change form and escape by tricks if a great army came against him. Raikō thought long and hard and decided that numbers would not help him. What was needed was not only strength, but wisdom.

Because of this, he chose only a very small company. He took with him his four mighty followers, and besides them only one close friend, Hirai Hōshō, who was himself counted by many as worthy to stand beside the Four Heavenly Kings. These six men would go together and trust to skill more than force. Yet even Raikō knew that human power alone might not be enough. So each pair of warriors went to pray to the gods. Raikō and Hōshō went to Hachiman at Otokoyama, Tsuna and Kintoki prayed at Sumiyoshi, and Sadamitsu with Suetake went to Kumano, asking for help and good fortune in battle.

When the day came to leave for Ōeyama, the six warriors dressed not as famous fighters but as mountain priests. They put on small black caps and robes of rough traveling cloth. Their armor and helmets were hidden in packs on their backs, so that no one who saw them would know who they really were. In one hand each man held a pilgrim's staff, and in the other a rosary. With leggings on their lower legs and straw sandals on their feet, they looked exactly like holy men walking through the mountains for training.

In this disguise they crossed ridge after ridge and made their way at last to the foot of Ōeyama. The road was hard and wild, and wherever they met a woodcutter, they quietly asked the way to the deep place where the ogre's cave was said to stand. They crossed valleys, climbed narrow slopes, and passed farther and farther into dark woods where hardly any light came through. The ground was rough with stone, and even strong men felt the long pain of the climb in their legs and backs. Still they did not turn back, because they knew too well what waited for the children taken from the city.

Deep in that lonely place they came at last to a large cave. Inside it stood a small hut, and in the hut lived three old men. Raikō stopped at once and watched them carefully, because such a thing in that place seemed strange, and he feared

that they might be ogres in another form. But the old men smiled gently, bowed, and said, “Please do not doubt us. We are not spirits of evil, nor are we servants of the ogre. One of us comes from Settsu, one from Kii, and one from Yamashiro. The ogre of this mountain took our wives and children. We came here hoping to strike him down, but we were too weak. So we have waited here for men like you.”

Hearing this, Raikō at last believed them and entered the hut with his companions to rest their tired feet. Then the old men told them an important thing. “Shuten Dōji loves strong drink above all things,” they said. “When he is fully drunk, his body grows weak, and he cannot change shape or escape.” Then they brought out a jar and said, “This is a strange sake, called the divine help that becomes poison to ogres. A man who drinks it becomes light and strong. But if an ogre drinks it, his body goes numb, and all his magic power leaves him. Take this, make him drink deeply, and then cut off his head.”

The warriors received the jar with deep thanks, and the old men rose to guide them farther up the mountain. They passed through a long black cave and came out beside a little stream that ran with a soft rushing sound between the stones. There the three old men turned and said, “Follow this water upward. By the bank you will find a young woman. Ask her the way to the ogre’s dwelling.” No sooner had they spoken these words than they vanished from sight. Then Raikō and the others understood that these had not been ordinary old men at all, but the gods themselves appearing in that humble form. The six warriors turned back, pressed their hands together, and bowed deeply toward the empty place, their hearts suddenly stronger than before.

Part 2

Following the little stream as they had been told, Raikō and his five companions climbed higher into the mountain. The sound of the water ran beside them without rest, and the air in that place felt cold even in the daytime. After a while they saw a young girl of seventeen or eighteen by the bank. She was washing clothes in the stream, but the clothes were stained with blood, and as she washed them she wept

softly. The sight filled the warriors with pity, for they knew at once that this mountain held no common sorrow.

Raikō went near and asked her gently, “Who are you, and why are you alone in such a place?” The girl lifted her tear-filled eyes and said, “I was taken from the capital one night by the ogres and brought here. I do not know whether I will ever again see my father, my mother, or the old nurse who cared for me.” Then she looked at the six travelers with surprise and added, “And who are you, that you have come so deep into this mountain? No human being ever comes here.” Raikō answered quietly, “We have come by command of the Emperor to destroy the ogres, so you need not fear.”

At these words the girl’s face changed at once. Hope, which had long seemed dead, suddenly came back into her eyes. She told them of the iron gate above, guarded by a red ogre and a black ogre, and of the palace within, bright like a house of jewels. In that dreadful place, she said, Shuten Dōji drank day and night, made the captive girls sing, dance, and serve him, and when he tired of them, he cruelly took their blood and threw away their bodies. “Even today,” she said, touching the cloth in her hands, “I am washing the blood-stained robe of a girl who was killed.” The warriors listened in silence, and their wish to destroy the ogre grew harder than iron.

They comforted the girl as best they could and then went on as she had directed them. Before long they saw the iron gate rising dark and heavy in the mountain. On either side stood the guards exactly as the girl had said, one red and one black, both terrible in face and body. Then Raikō and the others began to act their part. Dragging their feet and bending their bodies as if they were exhausted, they called in weak voices, “Please have pity on poor travelers. We have lost our way in the mountain and cannot go another step. Let us rest here for a little while.”

The ogres stared in surprise, for it was a strange thing indeed for men to appear there alive. “This is rare,” they said. “We must report it to our lord.” So they went inside and told Shuten Dōji, who answered at once, “Interesting. Bring them in.” The six warriors were led to a veranda and made to wait. Then the air suddenly changed, and there came sounds like thunder and rushing wind. A great red ogre,

taller than any man, appeared before them with wild hair standing up, round glaring eyes, and a face so dreadful that an ordinary person would have fainted at once.

But Raikō and his companions did not move. They looked straight back at Shuten Dōji and bowed with calm respect. The ogre asked in a proud voice, “Who are you, and from where have you come? Few men have ever climbed this far.” Raikō answered smoothly, “We are mountain priests from Haguro in Dewa. We have been training in the mountains of Yamato, and while trying to make our way toward the capital, we lost the road and came here.” Shuten Dōji listened, and because their story sounded natural, he began to trust them.

“Then rest here and drink some sake,” he said. Raikō bowed and replied, “That is great kindness. We too happen to carry a little sake with us, and we would be honored if you would drink some of ours as well.” The ogre liked these words and at once ordered that a feast should begin. Many servants and captive women brought out cups and food. Yet even then Shuten Dōji wished to test his guests, so first he filled a great cup with fresh human blood and set it before Raikō.

Raikō took the cup without the slightest change in his face and drank it down at once. After him Hōshō drank, then Tsuna, and then the others in turn, until the cup came back empty. Shuten Dōji laughed with pleasure and next brought out raw human flesh for them to eat. The six men cut it and ate with such calm faces that the ogre’s last doubt began to fade. Believing now that these travelers were no ordinary men, but strange holy wanderers who feared nothing, he became open-hearted and cheerful.

Then Raikō gave the sign, and Tsuna brought out the sacred poisoned sake that the gods had given them. He poured it full into Shuten Dōji’s great cup, and the ogre drank it in one long swallow. “Excellent,” he cried. “Give me more.” Raikō, hiding his joy, rose with a fan in his hand and began to dance. The Four Heavenly Kings clapped the beat and sang in lively voices, and the other ogres roared with laughter and drank cup after cup as they watched. Little by little the poison worked through their bodies, until one after another they collapsed on the floor, senseless with drink.

The moment the ogres lay helpless, the six warriors took their armor and helmets from their packs and put them on. Then, all together, they drew their swords and rushed into the room where Shuten Dōji lay sleeping. The great ogre seemed pinned down as if iron chains held his hands and feet from every side. Raikō raised his sword and in one terrible blow cut off the huge head. But though the body could no longer move, the severed head suddenly opened its eyes, flew up into the air, and rushed straight at Raikō to bite him.

Flames burst from its mouth, and for a moment the room seemed full of fire and terror. Yet the bright star on Raikō's helmet shone so fiercely that the flying head could not come close. Raikō struck it again and again until at last it fell heavily to the ground and moved no more. By then the lesser ogres had begun to wake and seize their iron clubs, but Tsuna, Kintoki, Sadamitsu, Suetake, and Hōshō cut them down one after another, leaving none alive to escape. The battle was fierce, but it ended quickly, because the poison had broken the strength of the enemy before the swords were drawn.

When all danger had passed, the warriors searched the palace and freed the many girls who had been held there. Among them was the daughter of Ikeda Chūnagon, alive at last after so much grief. They also gathered the treasures that the ogres had stolen and came down safely from Ōeyama with the rescued maidens. When they returned to the capital, the Emperor rejoiced greatly and rewarded Raikō, Hōshō, and the Four Heavenly Kings with many gifts and honors. From that time onward, the people of Kyoto no longer feared that children would be stolen in the night, and they long remembered the brave deed of Raikō and his warriors.

Rashōmon

Part 1

After Minamoto no Raikō had destroyed the ogres of Ōeyama, another strange fear rose in Kyoto. People began to whisper that a demon had appeared at Rashōmon, the great gate of the city. It was said that the creature came out night after night and seized anyone unlucky enough to pass that way. Some said it ate travelers there in the dark. Because of such talk, people began to avoid the gate after sunset, and the name of Rashōmon itself filled many hearts with dread.

One spring evening, when a soft rain was falling without pause, Hirai Hōshō and Raikō's Four Heavenly Kings were gathered at Raikō's house. They were drinking sake together and passing the time with lively talk. One man told a funny story, and another answered with one stranger still, so that the room was full of laughter. Then Hōshō suddenly said, "They say a demon has been appearing at Rashōmon these days." At once Sadamitsu nodded and replied, "I have heard the same rumor."

Suetake and Kintoki opened their eyes wide and asked, "Can that really be true?" But Watanabe no Tsuna only laughed. "Nonsense," he said. "We only just destroyed the ogres of Ōeyama. How can demons be appearing everywhere one after another?" Sadamitsu, now half serious and half teasing, leaned toward him and said, "Then what will you do if one truly does appear?" Tsuna answered without the least trouble in his face, "If it appears, I will kill it."

The others seized on these words at once. "Good," they cried. "Then go now and destroy the demon of Rashōmon." Hōshō smiled quietly, clearly enjoying the challenge. Tsuna, who had also drunk much sake, did not step back from what he had said. "Very well," he answered. "I will go." At once he began to prepare himself, putting on armor, fastening on his sword, and getting ready to ride out into the rainy night.

Sadamitsu laughed and said, "Just going there proves nothing. You must leave some sign, or no one will know whether you truly went." Tsuna answered at once,

“Then I will set up a great notice board in front of Rashōmon.” He took a large wooden board in his arms, mounted his horse, and rode away through the darkness. The rain struck his armor, the wind blew cold against him, and the road ahead was black and empty. Yet Tsuna urged his horse forward without fear.

At last he reached Rashōmon. There in the deep dark and steady rain, he rode back and forth before the gate for some time, waiting for the demon to appear. He listened hard, and more than once he looked up into the darkness of the gate itself. But nothing came. No shape moved, no voice sounded, and no sign of any demon appeared before him. At last Tsuna laughed to himself and said, “So this was all empty talk. Since I have come all this way, I will at least leave the notice board and then return.”

He set the board up in front of the gate and turned his horse back toward home. By then the rain had grown heavier, and the wind moved more sharply through the dark. Tsuna bent forward and urged his horse to go faster. Suddenly the animal gave a strong shiver through its whole body. In that same instant Tsuna felt something heavy drop down upon the back of the saddle behind him.

He thought at once, “So at last it has appeared.” Without crying out or losing his calm, he turned his head slightly to look back. Something rough and hard brushed against his face, and in the same moment a hand seized him firmly by the neck from behind. Tsuna did not struggle wildly. Instead, while being held fast, he reached back and caught the creature’s arm.

“So,” he said, “you are the demon of Rashōmon.” A harsh voice answered him at once. “Yes. I am Ibaraki Dōji of Mount Atago, and every night I come here to seize people.” Then, still gripping Tsuna, the demon lifted him high up into the air. The ground dropped away, and the black rain and wind seemed to whirl around them together in the night sky.

Even then Tsuna did not panic. While he was being drawn upward, he quickly pulled his sword and struck sideways with all his strength. The blade flashed through the darkness and cut clean through the demon’s arm. At once a terrible cry sounded in the night. In the next moment Tsuna was thrown down hard onto the roof of Rashōmon, while the severed arm remained in his grasp.

From far off in the black clouds above, he heard the demon's voice cry, "I leave this arm with you for seven days." Then the creature fled away into the storm. Tsuna slowly climbed down from the roof, still holding the arm tightly. Though he had been dragged into the sky and hurled down again, he had not let go of his prize. Carrying the cut arm with him, he made his way back through the rain to Raikō's house.

When he returned, the others were waiting eagerly for him. They gathered around at once and brought the arm under the light to look at it well. It was hard as rusted iron, and thick silver hair covered it all over. Seeing this, the men praised Tsuna's courage and skill again and again. Then they poured more sake, marveled over the strange arm, and spoke late into the night of the demon that had truly appeared at Rashōmon.

Part 2

After that night, Tsuna did not leave the demon's arm lying out where anyone could see it. He remembered very clearly the voice that had called from the clouds, "I leave this arm with you for seven days." Because of those words, he thought that the demon would surely try to take it back before the seven days were over. So he placed the arm inside a strong box and shut it tightly. Then he closed the gate of his house and put up a notice saying that he was in seclusion for a religious observance.

Inside the house, Tsuna stayed on guard and read sacred prayers. His servants also kept watch carefully and spoke in low voices, for all of them felt that something strange might happen before long. The cut arm itself was dreadful to look at even in stillness. Its skin seemed hard as old iron, and the silver hair upon it caught the light in an ugly way. No one looked at it without remembering the dark flight through the rain at Rashōmon. Yet the days passed one by one, and nothing happened.

On the first day there was no sign of trouble. On the second and third days the house remained quiet, and no strange sound came at the gate. By the fourth and

fifth days, even the servants began to hope that perhaps the demon had given up. Tsuna himself stayed careful, but he too felt a little less tension in his heart. Then the sixth day passed as peacefully as the others. At last the seventh day came, and evening drew near.

Just as the light was beginning to fade, someone knocked softly at the gate. One of Tsuna's servants went to the crack in the gate and looked out. There he saw an old woman with white hair, leaning on a staff and holding a hat in her hand. She looked weak and tired from travel, and she stood there in a humble way. The servant asked, "Who are you?"

The old woman answered in a sad voice, "I am Tsuna's aunt. I have come all the way from Watanabe in Settsu to see him." Hearing this, the servant felt pity for her and said, "That is unfortunate indeed. My master is in seclusion, and until tomorrow morning he cannot meet anyone." The old woman sighed deeply and lowered her head. "Tsuna lost his mother when he was young," she said, "and I raised him in her place. Now I hear that he has become a great warrior, and so I came from far away to see him once more."

Then she spoke even more sorrowfully. "But I am old now, and my life is not long. Who knows whether I will still be alive if I try to come again another time? It is hard to think that I have come so far only to be turned away without even seeing his face." Her voice was so full of grief that the servant did not know what to do. At last he went in and reported everything to Tsuna. He repeated the woman's words exactly as he had heard them.

Tsuna listened and felt troubled at once. The old woman's story sounded natural, and the thought of an aged aunt who had cared for him in childhood moved his heart. Still, he remembered the demon's warning and remained cautious. So he sent back the answer that he could not meet anyone until the seven days were fully over. When the servant gave this message, the old woman seemed even more disappointed than before, yet she did not grow angry.

"Well," she said, "if that is so, I must give up seeing his face. But if the child I raised has truly won such a great victory, then I would at least like to see the demon's arm. That alone would make me happy." When these words were brought

to Tsuna, he again refused and explained politely that he could show the arm to no one until the observance ended. The old woman then bowed her head and said, "Then there is nothing to be done. I am old, and perhaps it is simply my bad fortune." Hearing how weak and disappointed she sounded, Tsuna began to feel more and more sorry for her.

At last he thought, "It would be cruel to send her away with nothing after such a journey." So he ordered that she should be brought inside. When she came in, she looked just as before, bent with age and harmless in appearance. Tsuna greeted her respectfully, and after a few words of pity and apology, he said, "Since you have come so far, I will show it to you for a moment." Then he brought out the strong box and set it before her.

"Let me see, let me see," said the old woman, leaning closer. Tsuna lifted the lid. She bent over the open box and looked silently for a few moments at the dreadful arm inside. Then she said, "Ah, so this is the demon's arm." In the next instant she stretched out her left hand with sudden speed, seized the arm, and sprang backward.

Before Tsuna could fully move, the old woman's shape changed. Her bent back straightened, her face became terrible, and in a moment she stood there in the form of the demon itself. Tsuna gave a cry and snatched up his sword, but the demon was already rising into the air. It burst through the roof with a crash, carrying away the arm that had been cut off at Rashōmon. By the time Tsuna rushed outside, it had already fled far away into the clouds.

After that, the demon of Rashōmon was never seen again. People said that Tsuna had been brave enough to cut off its arm, yet the creature had at last used trickery to recover what it had lost. The story spread widely through Kyoto, and everyone spoke of the rain-dark gate, the battle in the sky, and the old woman who was no old woman at all. As for Tsuna, he never forgot how close pity and danger had stood together on that seventh evening. And from then on, the tale of the demon's arm remained one of the strangest and most famous stories told about Rashōmon.

The Matsuyama Mirror [Matsuyama Kagami]

Part 1

Long ago, in a lonely country place at the foot of Mount Matsu in Echigo, there lived a small family of three. There was a father, a mother, and their young daughter. Their house stood far from the great roads, in a quiet place among fields and hills. Life there was simple, and the days passed in peace. The little girl was loved dearly by both her parents, and the three of them lived close together and happily.

One day, however, the father found that he had important business that would take him to Kyoto. In those old times, such a journey was no light matter. To go from Echigo to the capital meant many days of travel, many mountain roads, and many hard nights away from home. A man had to cross hill after hill and go farther than the eye could imagine. So although the father had to leave, both he and the mother felt anxious in their hearts.

When all was ready and the time came for him to go, the father said to his wife, "Please take good care of the house while I am away. And watch our child carefully." The mother answered, "Yes, of course. You must not worry about us. Only be careful on the road, and come home safely and soon." Their voices were calm, but both of them knew the road would be long and difficult. They stood together for a moment, thinking of the days that lay ahead.

The little daughter, however, was still so young that she could not truly understand what a long journey meant. She thought her father would go only a little way and then come back quickly. So instead of crying sadly, she said in a bright voice, "Father, I will be a good girl and stay quietly at home, so please buy me a present." The father smiled at once and said, "Very well, very well. But in return, you must obey your mother and behave properly." The little girl nodded happily, thinking more of the promised gift than of the parting.

After the father had gone, the house suddenly felt empty and still. For the first day or two, the daughter remained cheerful enough and stayed near her mother

while she worked. She played quietly and tried to be good, just as she had promised. But when the third and fourth days passed, she began to miss her father. The quiet of the house now felt strange, and even the small sounds of daily life seemed lonely.

“Mother,” she asked, “when will Father come home?” The mother answered gently, “He will not come home until he has slept many nights on the road.” The child looked puzzled and said, “Is Kyoto really such a far place?” Her mother smiled sadly and replied, “Yes, very far. It takes more than ten days just to go there, and just as many days to come back.” Then the girl sighed and said, “That is such a long time. I wonder what sort of present Father will bring me.”

Her mother answered, “It will surely be something good. You must wait and look forward to it.” So they talked in this way day after day while the time slowly passed. Ten days went by, then twenty, and before long nearly a whole month had passed. At last the girl grew tired of waiting. “I have slept and slept,” she said sadly, “and still Father has not come back.”

The mother counted on her fingers and said, “He should be home before very long now. Since we do not know exactly when he will return, let us clean the rooms and make everything neat.” Then she began to put the house in order. The little girl also took a small broom and helped by sweeping the garden and moving about busily. In this way the two of them worked together, while secretly both were listening for the sound of footsteps.

Then, that very evening, the father came home at last. He came carrying a pack on his back and saying, “Ah, I am tired, I am tired.” The moment the little girl heard his voice, she ran out at once and cried, “Father, welcome home.” The mother too came gladly and helped him take down the load from his back. The child’s eyes shone brightly, for she was certain that somewhere in that baggage there must be a fine present for her.

The father had hardly sat down and taken even a single cup of tea before he reached into his bundle and brought out a long narrow box. Smiling, he said, “Here is the present I promised you.” The little girl took it eagerly, thanked him, and opened it at once. Inside she found pretty dolls and toys, more than enough to

delight a child's heart. She hugged them to her breast and jumped about the room, crying, "How wonderful, how wonderful."

Then the father brought out another box, this one flat and round, and handed it to his wife. "This is your present," he said. The mother opened it and found inside a round flat thing made with shining metal. She turned it over and looked at it from one side to the other, but she could not understand what it was for. Seeing this, the father laughed kindly and said, "That is a mirror. It is something one sees only in the capital. Look here." Then he held it up toward her face. The mother gazed closely at the bright surface and saw her own face looking back at her. She stared in deep wonder and could only say again and again, "Oh my, oh my."

Part 2

The mother kept looking into the bright round thing with wonder in her face. She had never before seen such an object, and she could not understand how a face could appear inside it so clearly. The father smiled and said, "In the capital, ladies use this when they dress their hair and make themselves neat. It shows the face of the person who looks into it." Then he put the mirror carefully back into its box and gave it to her again. The mother received it as if it were some rare treasure from another world.

After that, she valued the mirror greatly and kept it safe with special care. She did not leave it out in the open where it might be damaged or lost. Instead, she wrapped it and put it away, and only from time to time did she bring it out to look at it. Whenever she did so, she still felt the same fresh surprise. To a woman who had spent all her life in a lonely country place, it seemed as strange and wonderful as magic.

The days passed quietly after the father's return, and for a while the little family lived happily together once more. But before very long, sorrow came to the house. The mother fell ill. At first they thought it was only a passing sickness, and both the father and the daughter hoped that she would soon recover. Yet the illness did not leave her, and day by day her strength grew less.

The father was deeply troubled and did all he could for her. The little daughter also stayed near her mother with a worried face and tried to help in small ways. But the mother's color faded, and her voice became weaker. At last she herself understood that she would not live much longer in this world. Though she felt sorrow at leaving her husband and child behind, she kept her heart calm and thought especially of her daughter.

One day she called the little girl to her pillow and spoke very gently. "My dear child," she said, "I shall soon die." The girl was shocked and cried at once, for she loved her mother dearly and could not bear such words. The mother put out her weak hand and comforted her as best she could. "Do not cry so," she said. "Listen carefully to what I tell you."

Then she brought out the mirror in its box and placed it in the child's hands. "After I am gone, there may be times when you miss me very much," she said. "When that happens, take this out and look into it. If you do, you will be able to see me there." The little girl listened with tears on her cheeks and nodded, though she did not fully understand. The mother wished only to leave her some comfort, and so she spoke in that tender way.

Soon after that, the mother died. The house, which had once been full of quiet happiness, fell into deep sorrow. The father grieved greatly, and the little girl cried again and again for the mother she loved. For many days she could not stop thinking of her face, her voice, and the gentle hands that had cared for her. Everything in the house reminded her of the one who was no longer there.

Then one day, remembering her mother's last words, the girl took out the mirror box. She carried it softly into a room by herself, opened it with trembling hands, and looked inside. At once she saw there a woman's face. It was the face of a kind, gentle woman who seemed to be looking at her with love. The girl gave a little cry, and her heart filled with wonder and joy.

Of course, what she saw was only her own face reflected in the mirror. But she was still young and knew nothing of such things. She had never before used a mirror and could not guess the truth. Because her mother had told her that she would see her there, the child believed with all her heart that the face in the mirror

was really her dead mother. From that moment on, the mirror became more precious to her than anything else in the world.

Whenever she felt lonely or wished to see her mother, she slipped quietly into a room by herself and took out the mirror. Then, each time she looked in, the same dear face appeared again. "Mother is here," she thought. "Mother is smiling at me." The sight always comforted her, and little by little her sorrow became easier to bear. Though she still missed her mother deeply, she believed that she had not been left completely alone.

In this way, the child grew up under the comfort of the mirror and the memory of her mother's love. The father watched her and felt sad, yet he was also glad that something could still give peace to her heart. The years went by, and after some time he took another wife, hoping that the house might again have order and warmth. This new wife was also kind to the girl, and at first there seemed to be no trouble between them. But the girl never forgot the mother who had died, and from time to time she still shut herself away with the mirror hidden in her hands.

Part 3

As the years passed, the girl's new mother treated her kindly. She was not harsh by nature, and in daily matters she cared for the child much as the first mother had done. The father watched this and felt relieved, because he wished his house to remain peaceful. Yet even in those calmer days, the girl still sometimes missed her dead mother very deeply. At such times, she would quietly slip away by herself with the mirror hidden in her hands.

She would go alone into a room and shut herself in for a while. Then she would take out the mirror and look into it in silence. Each time she did so, she believed that her mother's face appeared there again, smiling gently and speaking without words. After looking for some time, she would return calmer than before, as if her heart had been comforted. Because this happened again and again, the new mother slowly began to notice it.

At first she only felt concern. She saw that the girl sometimes had a sad face,

and she wondered what hidden sorrow still troubled her heart. Then she noticed that whenever such a time came, the girl always went off alone and stayed inside a room for longer than seemed natural. If anyone called to her, she answered only, "It is nothing," and tried to hide her feelings. This secrecy at last made the new mother uneasy.

"There must be something she keeps from me," she thought. "Why does she always go away alone like that?" Little by little, simple worry changed into suspicion. The more she thought about it, the less at peace she felt. At last she spoke to the father and said, "Your daughter hides something from us. I do not know what it is, but I fear there is some secret in her heart." The father, hearing this, was also puzzled.

"Very well," he said. "I will see for myself." So one day he quietly followed after his daughter when she slipped away to a room by herself. He stood outside without making a sound and looked in. There he saw the girl sitting alone, gazing with all her heart into something she held before her. She seemed so intent and so full of feeling that he stepped inside at once and said, "What are you doing there?"

The girl started in great surprise and turned red with shame. At once she tried to hide the thing in her hands, but her father had already seen enough to know that it was some object she treasured. "What is that?" he asked. "Show it to me." The child looked troubled and frightened, as if she had been caught doing something wrong. But she could not refuse her father, and slowly she brought out the mirror and placed it before him.

The moment he saw it, he said, "Why, this is the very mirror I once brought home from the capital and gave to your mother." Then he looked at his daughter in wonder and asked, "Why have you been looking at this so secretly?" At these words, the girl began to speak in all innocence. She told him that her mother, before dying, had said that if she ever missed her, she should open the box and look inside. She explained that whenever she did so, her mother truly appeared there, and for that reason she had often gone alone to see her.

Hearing this, the father at first felt great surprise, and then deep pity. He understood at once what had happened. His daughter had never known how a

mirror worked, and because she resembled her dead mother so closely, she had mistaken her own reflected face for the face of the woman she had lost. For a moment he could not speak, because the child's pure heart moved him too deeply. Then at last he said softly, "My dear child, that is not your mother's face. It is your own."

The girl looked up in confusion, not understanding. So the father drew her nearer and said, "You are still young, so you did not know. The mirror shows the face of the one who looks into it. Since you resemble your mother so much, you believed that the face in the mirror was hers. Your mother, wishing to comfort your heart, told you that you would see her there. In that way she hoped to ease your sorrow." As he said this, his voice grew gentler and gentler.

Just then the new mother, who had quietly come near and heard everything, stepped into the room. Tears stood in her eyes. She took the girl's hand and said, "Now I understand it all. What a gentle and loving heart you have. I was wrong to doubt you." The girl, hearing these words, lowered her head and answered softly, "I am sorry that I caused worry to Father and to you." At that moment all the misunderstanding in the house came to an end.

After that, peace returned fully to the family. The father was moved by his daughter's innocence and by the lasting love she bore for her dead mother. The new mother no longer felt any jealousy or suspicion, but instead loved the girl all the more warmly than before. As for the girl, she kept the mirror with even greater care, not because she believed it truly held her mother, but because it remained a precious memory of her mother's love. And so the family lived on together in understanding and kindness, while the story of the Matsuyama Mirror was passed down from age to age.

The Mice's Wedding [Nezumi no Yomeiri]

Part 1

Long ago, in the middle of a storehouse full of rice, wheat, beans, and many other good things, there lived a rich family of mice. They had more food than they could ever finish, and so they lived in great comfort. The father mouse and the mother mouse were proud of their good fortune. Yet for many years they had no child, and that was the one sadness in their happy life. So they prayed earnestly to the gods, asking for a daughter.

At last their prayer was answered, and a little girl mouse was born to them. She grew day by day, and as she grew, she became more and more lovely. Her fur was fine, her face was pretty, and her manner was gentle and bright. Before long, everyone said that no mouse in the whole country could compare with her. Her parents were delighted, and they praised her beauty every day.

But when the daughter had grown old enough to marry, her parents found a problem. Among all the mice they knew, they could not find any young mouse who seemed good enough for such a daughter. "Our child is the finest daughter in Japan," said the father mouse. "Then we must find her the finest husband in Japan," said the mother mouse. The more they thought about it, the prouder and more determined they became. They decided that an ordinary mouse would never do.

"Then who is the greatest and strongest being in the world?" asked the mother mouse. The father mouse thought for a long time and then cried, "Of course. It must be the Sun. The Sun shines high in the sky and lights the whole world below. There can be no one greater than the Sun." The mother mouse clapped her paws and said, "Yes, yes, that must be right. Let us go at once and ask the Sun to become our daughter's husband."

So the father mouse, the mother mouse, and their lovely daughter all set out together. They traveled upward as far as they could and called respectfully to the Sun. "O Sun, O Sun," said the father mouse, bowing low, "you are surely the greatest and strongest being in all the world. Please marry our dear daughter." The

mother mouse bowed too, and the daughter stood shyly beside them. They waited, full of hope, for a happy answer.

But the Sun smiled kindly and said, "I thank you for your words, but I am not the strongest in the world." The father mouse opened his eyes wide in surprise. "What do you mean?" he asked. "You shine over all the earth. Who could possibly be greater than you?" The Sun answered, "When a cloud comes across the sky, it hides my face and stops my light. So the Cloud is stronger than I am."

The father mouse was very much surprised, but he nodded and said, "I see. Then we have come to the wrong place." The mother mouse also said, "If the Cloud is stronger, then the Cloud must be a better husband for our daughter." So the three mice thanked the Sun politely and turned away. At once they began their journey to the place where the Cloud could be found. The daughter said little, but she followed quietly where her parents led her.

When they reached the Cloud, the father mouse bowed again and said, "O Cloud, O Cloud, you must be the strongest in the world. Even the Sun says that you are stronger than he is. Please marry our daughter." The Cloud listened and then answered in a soft voice, "Your offer is kind, but I am not the strongest either." The mother mouse was greatly puzzled and cried, "Not the strongest? Then who is stronger than you?"

The Cloud replied, "When the Wind blows, it pushes me this way and that and tears me apart. However wide and dark I may be, I cannot stand against it. So the Wind is stronger than I am." The father mouse looked at the mother mouse, and the mother mouse looked at the daughter. Then all three understood that they must go still farther in search of the strongest husband. "Very well," said the father mouse, "then we must ask the Wind."

So they went to the Wind and bowed as deeply as before. "O Wind, O Wind," said the father mouse, "you must be the strongest in the world, since even the Cloud cannot resist you. Please take our daughter as your wife." The Wind laughed lightly and answered, "I am honored, but I am not the strongest either." The mice stared in disbelief, for by now they had thought their search must surely be near its end.

“Who could be stronger than you?” asked the mother mouse. The Wind answered, “There is one that I cannot move, however hard I blow. That is the Wall. I may rush against it with all my strength, but it stands firm and does not fall. So the Wall is stronger than I am.” Hearing this, the father mouse at last said, “Then we must go to the Wall, for now we are surely near the truth.” With that, the three mice turned once more and set out to ask the next great power in the world.

Part 2

After hearing the Wind’s words, the father mouse, the mother mouse, and their daughter went to the Wall. It stood there broad and firm, silent and unmoving, just as the Wind had described it. The father mouse bowed deeply and said, “O Wall, O Wall, you must surely be the strongest being in the world. Even the Wind says that it cannot move you. Please take our daughter as your bride.” The mother mouse bowed too, and the daughter lowered her eyes in modest silence.

The Wall answered in a slow and steady voice. “I thank you for your kind words, but I am not the strongest in the world.” At this, the father mouse was more surprised than ever before. He had already gone from the Sun to the Cloud, from the Cloud to the Wind, and from the Wind to the Wall. He had thought that surely his search must end here. So he cried, “If even you are not the strongest, then who in all the world can be stronger than you?”

The Wall replied, “Look at me closely. I may stand firm against the Wind, and I may seem hard and unshakable. Yet there is one small creature that can do what the Wind cannot. A mouse can bite through my body, make holes in me, and pass in and out as it pleases. No matter how hard and proud I may be, I cannot stop a mouse from eating through me. That is why I must say that mice are stronger than I am.”

When the father mouse heard this, he stood still for a moment and then struck his paw lightly as if a great truth had suddenly appeared before him. “Ah,” he said, “now I understand at last. We have been searching everywhere for the strongest husband in the world, yet all this time we did not see what was right before our

eyes.” The mother mouse also began to nod. “It is true,” she said. “What the Wall says makes perfect sense.” The daughter said nothing, but her quiet face seemed a little brighter than before.

The father mouse was so pleased by this discovery that he almost forgot all the trouble of the long journey. “Then that means,” he said proudly, “that we mice are the strongest creatures in the world after all. We can pass through storehouses, chew through boxes, bite through ropes, and even make holes in strong walls. This is indeed something wonderful.” The mother mouse smiled with satisfaction, and together they thanked the Wall for opening their eyes. Then the three turned and began to go home.

As they walked back, the father mouse no longer seemed troubled or uncertain. He moved with a proud and cheerful step and kept talking about what a fine thing it was to belong to such a strong and clever race. The mother mouse agreed with him in all things and said again and again that they had nearly made a great mistake. Their daughter listened quietly at their side. She had obediently followed them to the Sun, the Cloud, the Wind, and the Wall, but now at last the long search was ending.

When they reached home again, the father mouse wasted no time. “Now that we know the truth,” he said, “we must choose a husband from among our own kind.” Then he began to think carefully about the young male mice living nearby. He considered this one and that one, but before long his mind settled on a certain mouse who lived just next door. This was a fine young mouse named Chūsuke.

Chūsuke was not the son of kings, nor did he shine in the sky like the Sun. He had no power to cover the whole world like the Cloud, and he did not rush through the air like the Wind. He did not stand hard and proud like the Wall. Yet he was a good and lively young mouse, healthy, clever, and kind in his way. He came from a proper mouse family, knew how to find food, and had a pleasant manner that made others like him.

“Yes,” said the father mouse, “Chūsuke will do very well. He is a strong young mouse, and since we now know that mice are stronger than all those great beings we visited, there can be no better choice.” The mother mouse agreed at once. The

daughter was shy, but she did not object, for Chūsuke was good-looking and gentle, and she had known him since they were both small. So the match was arranged without delay. Before long the young bride and bridegroom were married.

After the wedding, the young couple lived together happily and in peace. Chūsuke treated his wife kindly, and she was a good and gentle wife to him. They also respected the father mouse and the mother mouse and cared for them with warm hearts. The rich storehouse remained full of grain and beans, and the whole family lived in comfort. In time many little mice were born, and the house grew full of cheerful noise and movement.

Thus the father mouse and the mother mouse learned that in marriage, as in many other things, it is not always wise to look too far away in search of greatness. They had gone up to the Sun, down to the Cloud, on to the Wind, and at last to the Wall, only to discover the value of their own kind. The young bride and Chūsuke lived together in harmony, and their family became larger and more prosperous year after year. And so the rich mouse family in the storehouse continued to flourish, while people long remembered the tale of the mice who searched the whole world for the strongest husband and found him next door.

The Cats' Tale [Neko no Sōshi]

Part 1

Long ago, in the city of Kyoto, there was a time when mice caused terrible trouble. They did not only steal food from kitchens and cupboards. They bit through paper doors, chewed holes in chests, tore fine clothes, and ran wildly through ceilings and room corners both day and night. No house seemed safe from them. People grew tired, angry, and helpless, because the mice behaved as if the whole city belonged to them.

At that time, however, the cats of Kyoto did not move about freely as they do now. In house after house, pet cats were kept tied by cords around their necks. They were fed well, given dried fish and rice, and treated as treasured animals inside the home. Because they were tied and carefully kept, they could not run through the streets and catch mice wherever they found them. For that reason, the mice had become bold and shameless, and no longer feared much of anything at all.

At last the trouble became too great, and an order came down from the authorities. It was announced that all tied house cats were to be set free at once. Any family that failed to untie its cat would be punished. The people of Kyoto heard this and obeyed, for they had suffered long enough from the mice. So cords were loosened, knots were undone, and one cat after another was released from the life it had known.

For the cats, this was a day of great joy. Calico cats, spotted cats, black cats, white cats, and every other kind leaped away the moment their cords were removed. They stretched their bodies, lifted their tails, and ran across the city with wild pleasure. Some raced along walls, some crossed roofs, and some darted through back streets as if they had been waiting all their lives for such freedom. Before long, cats seemed to be everywhere in Kyoto.

They did not merely walk about in a quiet way. They ran through the city for half the fun of it, full of life and excitement. One would stop suddenly and sharpen

its claws. Another would crouch in silence beneath a kitchen platform. Another would stare into a dark hole with shining eyes and twitching whiskers. Everywhere there was the feeling that the city had changed hands in a single day.

And now, of course, it was the mice who were in trouble. Until yesterday they had run where they pleased, stolen what they liked, and acted as though no one could touch them. But now everything had turned upside down. If even the tip of a nose appeared outside a hole, there was likely to be a cat waiting nearby with claws ready. The mice no longer felt that the city was theirs.

During the day they hid in dark holes and dared not move. Even when their stomachs were empty, fear kept them still. The sound of a paw on a floorboard, the shadow of a tail along a wall, the sudden gleam of eyes in a narrow place, all these things filled them with dread. A life that had once seemed easy and rich now became full of hunger and danger.

Night, which had once been their happy time, no longer felt safe either. Before, they had slipped boldly into kitchens, under sinks, and into corners where food had been left. Now the dark itself had become frightening. In the darkness there might be eyes already watching, green or gold and cold as fire. A mouse that went out to search for one grain of rice might never return.

So the mice suffered greatly and began to lose heart. They could not eat in peace, sleep in peace, or run in peace. Each family stayed pressed inside its hole, listening and waiting, never sure whether the next sound meant safety or death. Mothers worried over their young, old mice trembled, and even the bold young ones no longer laughed so loudly. The whole mouse world had fallen into fear.

At last many of them began to say, "This cannot go on. If things stay like this, we will either starve in our holes or be taken one by one by the cats." Another answered, "Then we must think of some way to stop them." A third said, "We cannot each hide alone and hope for the best. We must gather and hold a great meeting." As these voices spread from hole to hole, more and more mice agreed.

So one night, when the city had grown quiet and the danger seemed a little less near, word passed secretly among the mice. Old mice, young mice, large mice, and small mice were all told to come together. They were to meet beneath the

veranda of a temple hall and decide what could be done before it was too late. Thus, after the cats had taken over the streets of Kyoto, the frightened mice prepared at last to speak together about their danger.

Part 2

That night, as word passed secretly from hole to hole, the mice gathered beneath the veranda of a temple hall. Old mice came, and young mice came. Large mice, small mice, fathers, mothers, and restless children all crept in from every side. The place under the floor grew crowded and full of anxious whispering. No one had come there for joy. They had come because fear and hunger were pressing on them from all sides.

At last the oldest among them, a gray mouse with fur like salt and pepper, climbed onto a slightly higher place and stood before the rest. He looked over the crowd and said, "My friends, the times have become truly miserable. Cats should be content to live on the food given to them by human beings. Yet now they hunt us as though we were made only to fill their bellies. If things go on like this, the whole race of mice in the capital will soon disappear."

His words moved the crowd deeply, and many nodded with sad faces. Then a young mouse, full of spirit and anger, sprang up at once. "Why do we sit here and complain?" he cried. "Let us wait until the cats are asleep and then leap at their throats. If we bite hard enough, we can kill them." At these bold words, many mice murmured that he was brave and that perhaps he was right. But though some showed approval in their faces, not one stepped forward to lead such an attack.

Then another mouse, old and bent in the back, spoke from where he sat. His voice was slow, and he seemed already tired of the whole matter. "That is foolish talk," he said. "We cannot match cats in open struggle. It would be better to give up the city, go to the countryside, become field mice, and live simply on roots and husks." For a moment this seemed sensible, and some mice lowered their heads and thought of it seriously.

Yet the thought did not please them for long. They had spent their lives in Kyoto,

where food was rich, rooms were warm, and the smells from kitchens and storehouses were full of promise. To leave all that behind and gnaw at roots in the country was not an easy thing to choose. Even those who spoke of safety could not hide their dislike of such a hard life. So the gathering remained troubled and uncertain. No plan seemed good enough to save them without asking them to give up too much.

At last a white-headed mouse, who seemed calmer and wiser than most, rose to speak. "There is one thing we have not yet tried in the proper way," he said. "It was human beings who once kept the cats tied. If we ask them again, perhaps they will do so once more. We should beg them to put cords back on the cats before all of us are destroyed." The moment he said this, a murmur of agreement spread through the crowd. It seemed the safest plan they had heard all night.

So the mice chose the old gray chairman himself to go as their speaker. He was the most respected among them, and his manner was grave and careful. Without delay he climbed quietly up into the temple building and crept toward the room where the priest was sleeping. Standing there in the darkness, he called in as humble a voice as he could, "Reverend sir, Reverend sir, I beg you, please hear my prayer." The priest awoke in surprise and sat up to listen.

"Who is there?" asked the priest. "It is only a mouse," the gray one answered, bowing low, "but I have come with a great sorrow." Then he told of the order that had set all the cats loose, of the many mice already lost, and of the hunger that now filled every hole in the city. He said, "If we stay hidden, we die without food. If we go out, we die beneath sharp claws. Please show mercy and ask that the cats be tied once more." As he spoke, he pressed his little paws together as if praying with all his heart.

The priest listened and then remained silent for a time. At last he said, "I do pity your suffering. But you mice are not without fault. Until now you have run through people's houses day and night, stolen food, torn clothes, and caused endless trouble. If you had lived only on what was thrown away or what fell to the ground, matters would be different. But after doing so much harm, it is hard to come now and complain that the cats trouble you in return." His words were

calm, yet they fell on the gray mouse like cold rain.

The old mouse had no answer. Full of disappointment, he bowed and crept back under the veranda, where all the others were waiting with stretched necks and lifted whiskers. The moment they saw his face, they knew that hope had failed. When he told them how the priest had refused, a deep sadness fell over the whole company. Yet they did not give up at once. They argued again and again until the night began to pale, but no better plan came out of all their noise.

At last, fearing that dawn would uncover their great gathering and bring the cats upon them, the mice broke up the meeting. Before leaving, they decided only one thing: on the next night they would return again and try once more, perhaps with greater numbers and greater pleading. Then they scattered back to their separate holes, moving quietly through the half-light with heavy hearts. Their fear had not lessened, their hunger had not lessened, and the streets above still belonged to the cats. So the mice waited uneasily for the coming of the next night, when they would be forced to think once more about how to save their lives.

Part 3

The next day, the story of the mice's secret meeting spread quickly through the city. Cats have sharp ears and quick feet, and before long they too had heard that the mice had gone to beg the priest for help. "This is not something we can ignore," they said. So the cats also gathered in great numbers on an open field near the edge of town. Just as the mice had done, they met to discuss what should be done next.

Among them stood an old white cat, grave and proud, on a stone a little higher than the rest. He looked down over the crowd and began to speak in a loud clear voice. "Friends," he said, "we have only just won our freedom, and already the mice are trying to take it from us. They went to the priest and begged that we should be tied once more as in the old days. This is an insult not only to us, but to the order of the world itself."

The other cats listened with shining eyes and twitching tails. The old white cat

went on, "Mice have from ancient times been proper food for cats. On top of that, they are thieves and destroyers, causing trouble in every house they enter. If their words were accepted, and we were tied again, then they would only grow more bold and wicked than before. We must go at once and make certain that no such thing happens."

"Yes, yes, that is right," cried the other cats together. "Go, old white one. Speak for all of us." So the white cat was chosen as their messenger and went at once to the temple. There he bowed before the priest and spoke in a smooth but proud voice. He complained of the mice, called them thieves, and said that cats, though now small and gentle, were descended from tigers and could destroy any wicked beast if they chose.

The priest listened with a quiet smile and said, "Yes, yes, what you say is not without reason. I did not accept the mice's request, so you may set your minds at ease." The white cat was delighted and went back at once to the field where the others waited for him. "All is well," he said proudly. "The priest has understood us." Then the cats lifted their tails, cried out in joy, and danced together in triumph.

But news also travels quickly among mice. Soon the frightened mice heard that the cats too had gone to the priest, and that he had promised not to accept the mice's plea. This struck them like another blow after a sleepless night. So once again they gathered beneath the temple veranda and began another anxious meeting. Yet no new wisdom came from all their noise and whispering.

At last some of the older mice said, "There is no use in begging anymore. The priest will not help us, and the cats have become too strong in the city. Before the night is over, let us gather our families and flee from Kyoto. Better to live poorly in the countryside than to die here beneath claws." Many tired and frightened mice felt that this was the only wise choice. Already they began in their hearts to say farewell to the city.

But the young mice could not bear such words. Several of them sprang up at once and cried, "Wait. Are we to give up our home without even one real fight? If we run now, we may save our lives, but we will become a laughingstock among all beasts forever. Better to fight once with all our strength than to creep away in

shame.” Their voices were sharp with anger, and their eyes flashed in the darkness.

The more they spoke, the more the others were stirred by their courage. “That is true,” said one. “Why should we fear cats so much?” said another. Even mice who had only a moment before been ready to flee began to stamp their feet and nod fiercely. Soon the whole gathering changed its tone. What had begun as a meeting of fear became a meeting of war.

Then the mice began to prepare in earnest. Some sharpened their teeth, some boasted loudly, and some ran to call more relatives and friends. They told themselves that if they won, then the whole city would again be theirs, from the ceilings to the kitchens and from the walls to the storehouses. And if they lost, then at least they would die together with honor. In this way their courage, once weak and uncertain, became hot and reckless.

The cats, however, were no slower. As soon as they heard that the mice were preparing for battle, they also sharpened their claws, bared their teeth, and made ready. “Let them come,” they said. “We will kill them all at once.” So both sides gathered strength, one in pride and the other in desperation. Before long, the mice were marching in black waves toward the open field where the cats were waiting, and the whole matter was moving toward a terrible fight.

Part 4

The field where the cats and mice faced one another was full of dangerous silence. The mice stood packed together in dark moving lines, their teeth ready and their hearts beating fast. Across from them the cats waited with lowered bodies, sharpened claws, and bright eyes that did not blink. For a moment it seemed that one leap from either side would begin a terrible killing. The air itself felt tight, as if it too were holding its breath.

Just then, before either side could spring, the priest from the temple came hurrying to the place. He had heard what was happening and feared that a useless slaughter was about to begin. Without thinking of his own safety, he walked straight into the middle ground between the two armies. Then he spread out both

his hands and cried, "Wait, wait a moment." His voice was calm, but it carried enough force that both sides stopped and looked toward him.

The mice, who had been half wild with fear and anger, grew still. The cats also lowered their paws and held back, though their tails still moved sharply from side to side. The priest stood quietly between them, looking first to one side and then to the other. When he saw that both would listen, he turned first to the mice. He knew well that they were the weaker side and would suffer most if battle began.

"Now listen to me," he said. "Even if you throw away your lives and fight with all your strength, you cannot defeat the cats. Not one of you would remain alive. You would all be killed here and become part of the dust of this field, and I do not wish to see such a sad thing." The mice heard these words and lowered their heads, for in their hearts they knew that what he said was true.

Then the priest went on more gently. "So you must change your ways. Be content to live according to your proper place. Eat the scraps that people throw away, and gather the grains of rice or beans that fall from the bales. Live on such things and keep yourselves alive in peace. But from this day on, you must stop all the bad tricks that bring trouble to human beings."

At once the mice became eager and cried out, "Yes, yes, we will do so. We will never again do wicked things or trouble people. Please tell the cats not to seize us anymore." Their voices were full of relief, because they had expected only death and now saw a small path toward safety. The priest nodded but did not smile too quickly. "Very well," he said. "But remember this clearly. If you begin your old mischief again, I will tell the cats at once, and they may take you as they please."

The mice all answered together, "Yes, yes, that is fair. We understand." They bowed low again and again, and many of them seemed ready to cry from simple relief. Then the priest turned from them and faced the waiting cats. The cats stood proudly, for they knew the mice had already yielded. Still, they listened with care, because they respected the priest and wished to hear what he would say.

"Now you also must listen," said the priest. "Since the mice have promised to change, you too should show patience and stop tormenting them from this time onward. If they truly keep their word and no longer steal or make trouble, then

you should leave them alone. But if they return to their old ways, then you may catch them whenever you find them. Will that satisfy you?" The cats looked at one another and saw that this was a wise and fair judgment.

Then the cats answered together, "Yes, that will do very well. If the mice truly stop their bad behavior, we will endure and be satisfied with the food given to us. Fish and rice are enough for us if there is peace." The priest was pleased to hear this and smiled quietly. He had feared that pride on one side and desperation on the other would make peace impossible. But now both had accepted a way that would spare needless blood.

Then he spoke once more, not only to settle the quarrel, but to teach them all a deeper lesson. "Do not think," he said, "that because one of you may defeat the other, there will then be nothing left to fear in the world. Mice cannot stand against cats, and cats cannot stand against dogs. Above every strength there is another strength. So it is foolish to believe that freedom comes from winning a fight over those weaker than yourselves."

He continued, "The best way is for each creature to be content with the life into which it was born. Beasts should live with beasts, birds with birds, and human beings with human beings, each in peace and without unnecessary harm. If you understand that, then go home quietly now and trouble one another no more." Hearing this, the cats and the mice both bowed deeply to the priest. Then, speaking many words of thanks and promise, they turned and went away in separate lines, until the field grew empty again and peace returned at last.

The Jellyfish's Errand [Kurage no Otsukai]

Part 1

Long ago, in the deep bottom of the sea, there stood a splendid palace where the Dragon King and his queen lived together. All the fish of the sea feared the Dragon King's great power and became his servants. The halls of the palace were rich and bright, and many sea creatures came and went there every day. It seemed a place of order and strength. Yet even in such a palace, sorrow could suddenly enter.

One day the queen fell seriously ill. The servants brought medicine after medicine, and every kind of treatment was tried. But nothing helped her at all. Little by little her body grew weaker, until her condition became so dangerous that no one could say whether she would live to see another day. The whole palace became dark with worry.

The Dragon King was beside himself with fear and grief. He called all his servants together and asked, "What in the world can we do?" But the fish and other sea creatures could only look at one another helplessly. No one knew how to save the queen. The great hall fell silent, and the silence itself felt heavy. At last, from far below, someone came slowly forward.

It was the octopus priest, moving on eight long legs. He bowed respectfully and said, "I often go up to the land and hear what human beings and land animals say. From what I have heard, the fresh liver of a monkey is said to be the best medicine for a sickness like this." The Dragon King leaned forward at once. His eyes sharpened, because at last there seemed to be one small path of hope.

"Where can such a thing be found?" he asked quickly. The octopus priest answered, "Far to the south there is a place called Monkey Island. Many monkeys live there. If one could be brought back from that island, then the queen might be saved." The Dragon King nodded and said, "I understand." Then a new question rose at once. Someone would have to go on this difficult errand.

The sea creatures began to discuss which one of them should be sent. Then the

sea bream said, “Jellyfish would be best for this task. It is not a fine-looking creature, but it has four legs and can move about freely on land.” At these words jellyfish was called before the Dragon King. The order was given, and there was no choice but to obey. Yet jellyfish was not clever by nature, and it did not know where even to begin.

So jellyfish went about asking questions of anyone it could catch. “What does a monkey look like?” it asked first. One replied, “It has a red face and a red bottom, and it likes to climb trees.” Another added, “It loves chestnuts and persimmons.” Then jellyfish asked, “And how can such a creature be caught?” The answer came at once: “Not by force. You must trick it.”

“How am I to trick it?” jellyfish asked. The others told it, “Say the kind of thing a monkey would enjoy hearing. Tell it of the Dragon King’s wonderful palace and of the many delicious things there. Speak so that the monkey will want to come of its own will.” Jellyfish listened very carefully and nodded again and again. But then another trouble came into its mind. “Even if I persuade it, how can I bring a monkey through the sea?”

“That is simple enough,” said the others. “You must carry it on your back.” Jellyfish looked unhappy at once and said, “A monkey will surely be very heavy.” But they answered, “That cannot be helped. This is service to your lord.” Jellyfish had no answer to that. It could only bow and accept what had been laid upon it.

Even so, the more it thought about the task, the more uncertain it felt. It had never seen a monkey with its own eyes. It had never gone on such an errand before, and now the life of the queen seemed to depend on it. Still, the Dragon King’s order was not something that could be refused. So jellyfish repeated to itself all the advice it had heard and tried to hold it firmly in mind.

At last it set out. Floating softly through the water, jellyfish swam southward toward Monkey Island. The sea moved quietly around it, but inside its heart there was no peace at all. It was afraid of making a mistake, yet it also wished to do its duty well and win praise from the Dragon King. So, full of worry and half-remembered advice, jellyfish made its way through the sea toward the island where the monkeys lived.

Part 2

After some time, jellyfish finally saw an island ahead in the distance. “That must be Monkey Island,” it thought as it floated closer and closer through the water. When it reached the shore, it climbed up a little and looked around carefully. Before long it saw, on the branch of a pine tree, exactly the sort of creature it had been told about: a monkey with a red face, a red bottom, and quick bright eyes.

Jellyfish understood at once that it had found what it was looking for. So it went nearer in a quiet and friendly way and said, “Good day, Mr. Monkey. The weather is very fine today.” The monkey looked down and answered, “Yes, it is very fine. But I do not think I have seen you before. Where have you come from?” Jellyfish bowed politely and said, “I am called jellyfish, and I serve the Dragon King. The weather was so pleasant that I wandered this way for a little outing, and now I see that Monkey Island is truly a wonderful place.”

The monkey liked to hear his home praised. He lifted his nose proudly and said, “Of course it is a wonderful place. The view is fine, and there are plenty of chestnuts and persimmons. There is nowhere better.” Jellyfish listened and then began to laugh as if it found this very amusing. “Yes, yes, this is certainly a fine place,” it said, “but compared with the Dragon Palace, it is nothing at all. Since you have never seen the Dragon Palace, you can still speak proudly in that way. I wish I could show you what a truly splendid place it is.”

These words immediately caught the monkey’s interest. “The Dragon Palace?” it said. “What kind of place is that?” Jellyfish answered, “Everywhere there is gold, silver, coral, and jewels. The halls shine beautifully, and in the gardens all kinds of fruit grow throughout the year. There is more good food there than anyone could ever finish. If you once saw it, you would never forget it.” The monkey slowly climbed down from the branch, its curiosity growing stronger and stronger with every word.

At last the monkey said, “If it is really such a fine place, I would like to see it.” Jellyfish was delighted inside, though it hid its joy and answered calmly, “Then

please come. I will take you there myself.” The monkey hesitated and said, “But I cannot swim.” “That is no trouble,” said jellyfish. “I will carry you on my back. Come, let us go at once.” The monkey agreed, and before long it had climbed onto jellyfish’s back.

Then jellyfish began to float northward over the sea with the monkey riding on it. For a while all went well. The waves moved quietly, and the monkey, though a little uneasy, looked around with interest at the wide water. From time to time it asked, “Is the Dragon Palace still far away?” and jellyfish answered, “Yes, there is still some distance.” At last the monkey began to grow restless and said, “This is rather dull.”

Jellyfish told it, “Please sit still and hold on tightly. If you move too much, you may fall into the sea.” But jellyfish was by nature foolish and talkative, and before long it could no longer keep silent. Wanting to show off its secret errand, it suddenly asked, “Mr. Monkey, do you happen to have a living liver?” The monkey was surprised by such a strange question and said, “Of course I do. But why do you ask such a thing?”

Jellyfish, now enjoying its own importance, answered little by little until at last it told the whole truth. “The Dragon King’s queen is very ill,” it said. “It is said that only the living liver of a monkey can cure her. That is why I came to bring you back. The important business is your liver.” When the monkey heard this, it was badly frightened. But because it was already out at sea and could not escape by force, it made itself stay calm and thought quickly.

So the monkey put on an easy face and said, “Oh, is that all? If my liver can cure the Dragon Queen, I do not mind giving it at all. But why did you not tell me from the start? Because I did not know, I left my liver behind on the island.” Jellyfish stopped in surprise. “Left it behind?” it said. The monkey nodded very seriously and replied, “Yes. I hung it on the branch of the pine tree to dry. A living liver must be taken out and washed from time to time, or it gets dirty.”

Jellyfish was simple enough to believe every word. “What a terrible mistake,” it said sadly. “If you do not have your liver with you, there is no use taking you to the Dragon Palace.” The monkey answered, “I think so too. Since I was coming

all the way there, it would be bad manners to arrive without such an important thing. Please trouble yourself just a little more and carry me back to the island. I will fetch it, and then we can go on.” Grumbling to itself, jellyfish turned around and swam all the way back.

The moment they reached the island, the monkey leaped off jellyfish’s back and ran up a tree with perfect speed. It climbed high and then stayed there, never once coming down. Jellyfish waited below and called, “Mr. Monkey, Mr. Monkey, what are you doing? Please bring your liver down quickly.” At that, the monkey began to laugh from the tree. “What nonsense,” it cried. “Who would carry his own liver outside his body? If I gave it to you, I would die at once. You foolish jellyfish, you tried to trick me, but I tricked you instead.”

Then the monkey made faces from the branch, slapped its red bottom, and laughed all the more. Jellyfish could do nothing. It could not climb trees, and it was too foolish to answer cleverly. So at last it turned away, crying sadly, and swam back to the Dragon Palace in deep shame. When it arrived, the Dragon King and all the others crowded around and asked, “Where is the monkey? Where is the living liver?” Jellyfish had no choice but to tell the whole story. The Dragon King became red with anger and ordered the sea creatures to punish it severely. So sea bream, flatfish, and many others gathered around, beat the poor jellyfish again and again, and shook it so hard that all the bones in its body were crushed and lost. That, people say, is why jellyfish today has no bones and no clear face, but remains soft and shapeless in the sea.

Bunbuku Chagama

Part 1

Long ago, in Tatebayashi in the province of Kōzuke, there stood a temple called Morinji. The priest of that temple loved the tea ceremony very much. He enjoyed collecting unusual tea tools and looking at them one by one. If he found a kettle, a bowl, or some other object with a special shape, he was pleased at once. His rooms were full of such things, and he often spent his free time admiring them.

One day the priest went into town on business. On his way back, he stopped at a tool shop and saw a tea kettle of a very pleasing shape. The moment he looked at it, he liked it. So he bought it at once and carried it back to the temple with satisfaction. When he reached his room, he set it out carefully where people could see it.

After that, whenever visitors came, he showed them the kettle with a proud face. “What do you think of this?” he would say. “It is a very fine kettle, is it not?” The visitors nodded politely, and the priest became more and more pleased with his purchase. He felt that he had found a truly excellent tea tool. For a while, he could think of little else.

One evening he placed the kettle in his sitting room, just as usual, and sat down near it. The room was quiet, and the soft warmth of the evening made him sleepy. Before long he began to doze, and after that he fell into a deep sleep. Everything in the room became still. Only the kettle sat there beside him in the silence.

Because the room was so quiet, the temple boys began to wonder what had happened. They came near and peered through a crack in the sliding door. Then they saw something so strange that their eyes opened wide at once. The kettle began to move all by itself. First a head came out, then thick fur, then four legs and a tail, and at last it got up and began to walk slowly around the room.

The boys could not bear such a sight in silence. They rushed into the room all at once and shouted, “Oh no, this is terrible. The kettle has come alive.” “Master, Master, wake up. The kettle is walking.” Their voices were so loud and confused

that the priest woke with a start. Rubbing his eyes, he sat up in anger and said, “Why are you making such a noise?”

“Please look,” cried the boys. “The kettle was walking just now.” The priest turned to look where they pointed. But by that time there was no head, no tail, and no legs anywhere. The kettle sat neatly in its place as if it had never moved at all. The priest frowned and said, “What foolish nonsense is this? You have disturbed my sleep for nothing.” The boys, however, still looked at the kettle with frightened and puzzled faces.

Even so, they came nearer and struck it lightly. It gave a clear metal sound, just like any ordinary kettle. Seeing this, the priest scolded them even more. The boys went away at last, still muttering that they had certainly seen it move. The priest remained annoyed, but before long he told himself that children always imagined strange things. So the matter might have ended there.

On the next day, however, he decided that he should finally use the kettle instead of only looking at it. “It is no good simply admiring a fine kettle forever,” he thought. “Today I will try it properly.” So he poured water into it. Though it was not a large kettle, it swallowed a whole dipperful at once as if it were drinking. The priest felt for a moment that this was a little odd, but nothing else happened, so he told himself not to worry.

Then he placed the kettle over the fire. After some time, when the bottom had grown hot, the kettle suddenly cried out, “Hot, hot.” At once it jumped out from the hearth. In the next instant a badger’s head appeared, then four legs, then a thick tail, and the strange creature began to walk about the room. The priest leaped up in terror and shouted, “Help, help. The kettle has turned into a monster.” The temple boys rushed in again with brooms and dusters, but by the time they arrived, the creature had already become an ordinary kettle once more.

The priest stood there with a pale face, unsure what to do. “I thought I had bought a fine kettle,” he said, “but instead I have brought home a troublesome thing.” Just then, from outside the gate, there came a cry of “Scraps, scraps.” The priest’s face changed at once. “Good,” he said. “A junk dealer has come at the right time. I should sell this thing and be rid of it.” So he called the junk dealer in,

and the man took up the kettle, rubbed it, turned it over, and examined it carefully. “This is a fine object,” he said at last. Then he bought it, put it into his basket, and carried it away, while the priest felt greatly relieved to have the strange kettle out of his temple at last.

Part 2

The junk dealer carried the kettle home in his basket, pleased with his purchase. He rubbed it, turned it over, and looked at it again and again. “This really is a fine object,” he said to himself. “If it is only an ordinary kettle, I have still bought well. And if it is a strange creature like the priest said, then perhaps I may make some use of it.” He was a poor man, but he was lively in mind and quick to notice a chance for profit.

That evening he set the kettle down in his room and waited to see what would happen. Before long, just as the priest had said, the kettle began to change. A badger’s head came out, then fur, then legs and a tail, and at last the whole strange creature stood before him. But unlike the priest, the junk dealer did not run away in fear. Instead he clapped his hands and laughed in delight.

“Well now,” he said, “you truly are a remarkable thing.” The creature also seemed glad not to be struck or chased. It moved about the room with a free and easy air, as if it had long wished to show its true form without being hated for it. The junk dealer watched carefully and began to think. “If this creature can do more than simply walk,” he told himself, “then perhaps we may make a living together.”

So he spoke kindly to the badger-kettle and tried to make friends with it. “Listen,” he said, “if you help me, I will treat you well.” The creature seemed to understand and did not refuse him. The junk dealer then built a small show booth and hung out signs to attract people. In this way he opened a sideshow and prepared to let the strange tea kettle appear before the public.

When the day of the first show came, curious people gathered from every side. They had heard that some wondrous thing would be seen there, and all wanted to

know what it might be. The junk dealer beat a drum, raised his voice, and welcomed the crowd inside. Then, when the time was right, the curtain went up and the badger-kettle came out before everyone's eyes.

The people were astonished at once. It was not merely a large kettle with a living face. The strange creature stepped out lightly, greeted the crowd with great politeness, and then began to perform. In one hand it held an umbrella, and in the other it opened a fan. After that it climbed onto a rope stretched high above the floor and began to dance there with wonderful balance.

While keeping its feet upon the rope, it moved its heavy round body in time as if it were a trained performer. Then it began to sing, and the song was one used in a well-known dance. The crowd cried out again and again in amazement. "Ah," they said, "we have never in all our lives seen such a marvelous show." The little booth shook with applause and excited voices.

From that day on, the show became famous far and wide. It was no longer only the neighbors who came. People traveled from many provinces, taking long roads and making special trips just to see the badger-kettle perform. Every day the little showhouse was full, and there were times when it seemed that the walls themselves would break from the noise of the crowd. Before long the junk dealer, who had once been poor, became a rich man.

Yet after some time he began to think more quietly. "Human desire has no end," he said to himself. "But if I go on making money forever from this creature, that will not be right." He also saw that the badger-kettle had worked hard for him and seemed tired. So one day he said, "You have helped me enough. It is time for you to rest." The badger-kettle seemed pleased by these words.

The junk dealer then took half the money he had earned and carried it, together with the kettle itself, back to Morinji. He went before the priest and said, "Thanks to this kettle, I have become wealthy. Here is half of what I earned, and I now return the kettle to your temple." The priest was surprised and glad, and he accepted both the money and the kettle with thanks. From then on, the kettle was no longer placed over a fire, but was carefully kept as a precious treasure of the temple.

After that, perhaps because it had grown tired, or perhaps because it was now treated with proper respect, the kettle did not again put out a badger's head and dance about in public. It remained quietly at the temple as one of its valued possessions. People continued to speak of its strange performances and of the fortune it had brought to the junk dealer. And so, they say, the Bunbuku Chagama was handed down at Morinji from that time to this, remembered as one of the most curious and delightful wonders of old Japan.

The Old Man Who Made the Dead Trees Bloom [Hanasaka Jijī]

Part 1

Long ago, in a certain place, there lived an old man and an old woman. They were honest, gentle people and had kind hearts. They had no child of their own, and so their house was quiet and lonely in one way. But with them lived a white dog named Shiro, and they loved him as if he were their own son. Shiro also loved the old couple deeply and stayed close to them at all times.

Next door there lived another old man and old woman. These two were very different in nature. They were greedy, hard-hearted people, and they hated seeing others live in peace. Because Shiro was loved so dearly by the honest old couple, the greedy neighbors could not help disliking him as well. They often spoke badly of him and looked at him with cold eyes.

One day the honest old man went out to work in his field, just as he always did. He carried his hoe over his shoulder and walked slowly toward the open ground. Shiro followed beside him, happy to be together as usual. The sun shone warmly, and the earth smelled fresh. Nothing at all seemed unusual at first.

But after a while, as the old man worked, Shiro began to run here and there, sniffing at the ground with great care. Then suddenly he came back, caught the hem of the old man's clothes with his mouth, and tugged at it strongly. The old man looked down in surprise and said, "What is it, Shiro? What has caught your attention?" But Shiro did not let go. He pulled again and again, as if begging him to come quickly.

At last the dog led him to the foot of a great tree standing near the edge of the field. There Shiro began scratching at the ground with his front paws and barking in an eager voice. "Wan, wan. Dig here, dig here," he seemed to say. The old man tilted his head and laughed a little. "What can there be in a place like this?" he asked. Still, because he trusted Shiro, he raised his hoe and struck the ground.

The moment the hoe bit into the earth, it gave a hard clear sound. The old man stopped at once and listened. "That was strange," he said. He dug again, and this

time the sound came once more, bright and sharp, like metal hidden in the soil. Now his heart began to beat faster. He bent down and scraped away the dirt more quickly.

The deeper he dug, the more clearly something bright began to shine up through the earth. Soon round little coins appeared, glittering in the hole. The old man opened his eyes wide in astonishment. He dug farther and farther, and more and more koban came out. There were so many that he could hardly believe what he was seeing.

He was so surprised and delighted that he cried out in a loud voice for his wife. "Come quickly," he shouted. "Come here at once." The old woman heard him and hurried over as fast as she could. When she saw the gold coins lying there in the earth, she too stood still in wonder. Then the two of them together began scooping them up with trembling hands.

"How strange. How wonderful," the old woman said again and again. "This must be Shiro's doing," the old man answered. "He has shown us where it was hidden." So they thanked the dog warmly and patted his white head with loving hands. Shiro wagged his tail and looked up at them happily, as if he too were glad from the heart. The treasure seemed to have come to them through his faithfulness.

That day the old man and old woman carried the koban home little by little and put them safely inside the house. In that way the poor but honest couple suddenly became rich. Yet they did not grow proud or cruel because of their good fortune. They remained as kind and simple as before, and they loved Shiro even more dearly than they had already done. To them he was no mere dog, but a true blessing sent into their lives.

Before long, however, the greedy neighbors heard what had happened. When they learned that Shiro had led the honest old man to hidden gold in the field, they burned with envy. They wanted such treasure for themselves and could think of nothing else. So, full of false smiles and secret greed, they soon came to borrow Shiro from the honest old couple. And thus the happiness that Shiro had brought into one house was about to lead him into great trouble in the next.

Part 2

Before long, the greedy old man next door came to borrow Shiro. He had heard the story of the hidden koban and burned with envy. The honest old man was good by nature and could not easily refuse a request, even from such a neighbor. So, though he felt a little uneasy, he let Shiro go with him. The greedy old man tied a rope to the dog's neck and pulled him roughly toward his own field.

"There must be gold in my land too," he kept saying. "Come on, Shiro. Show me where it is." He dragged the dog here and there with no kindness at all. Shiro, hurt and unhappy, was pulled across the ground whether he wished it or not. At last, perhaps in pain and fear, he began scratching at the earth in one place. The greedy old man's eyes shone at once.

"Ah, here it is. This must be the place," he cried. He snatched up his hoe and began to dig with all his strength. He dug eagerly, thinking that koban would soon come shining up through the dirt. But nothing of the kind appeared. Instead, he found only broken bits of old pots and dirty useless things buried in the ground.

Still he would not stop. The more he dug, the dirtier and fouler the hole became. A bad smell rose up from the earth, and rotten rubbish came out in ugly lumps. The greedy old man stepped back in disgust and covered his nose. "What a horrible stink," he cried. His face twisted with anger, because all his bright hopes had turned into shame and filth.

In his rage, he blamed poor Shiro for everything. "You useless beast," he shouted. Then, forgetting all pity, he lifted his hoe and struck the dog hard on the head. Shiro gave one sad cry and fell there on the ground. In that cruel moment, the faithful white dog died. The greedy old man, having lost his temper completely, had killed the innocent creature who had once brought fortune to another house.

When the honest old man and his wife learned what had happened, their sorrow was very deep. They had loved Shiro as if he had truly been their own child. Now that dear animal was gone forever because of another person's greed. They wept and wept, and their tears would not stop. Yet since nothing could bring him back, they gently carried his body away to bury it.

They dug a grave for him at the side of their garden and laid him there with loving hands. Then they planted a small pine tree above the place, so that there would be a living sign to remember him by. "This will be Shiro's keepsake," the old man said softly. Day by day the tree grew, and before long it became a fine large pine. Whenever they looked at it, they thought of the faithful dog they had lost.

One day the old man said, "Since this tree stands in Shiro's memory, let us make something from it." So he cut down the pine and shaped the wood into a mortar. The old woman understood at once why he had done so. "Shiro loved rice cakes," she said. "Then let us pound rice in this mortar and make mochi." The thought itself brought both sadness and warmth to their hearts.

So they put rice into the mortar and began to pound it together. "Ton, ton, ton," went the sound of the pestle, as the old man and old woman worked side by side. But then a very strange thing happened. No matter how much they pounded, the rice did not simply become mochi in the usual way. More and more soft white cakes began to appear, until the mortar seemed full to the top.

Soon the mochi overflowed and came spilling out all around them. It piled up in the kitchen and spread across the floor. The old man and old woman stared in amazement and then laughed through their tears. Once again, it seemed that Shiro had brought them a blessing from beyond the grave. Their poor house, which had been heavy with sorrow, was suddenly full of white cakes and wonder.

But the greedy neighbors soon heard of this too. Just as they had envied the gold, they now envied the old couple's endless mochi. Their hearts grew hot with desire, and they wanted the wooden mortar for themselves. So, unable to bear the good fortune of others, they came again to borrow the thing that had been made from Shiro's memorial tree.

Part 3

Soon after that, the greedy old man and his wife came to borrow the wooden mortar. They had heard that endless rice cakes had come from it, and they wanted

the same good fortune for themselves. The honest old couple were kind by nature and still found it hard to refuse, even after all the sorrow the neighbors had caused. So they lent out the mortar made from Shiro's memorial tree. The greedy pair carried it home with eager eyes and greedy hearts.

The moment they had it in their house, they put rice into it and began to pound. "Ton, ton, ton," went the sound, just as before. They worked harder and harder, hoping that soft white mochi would soon come pouring out. But instead of rice cakes, dirty things began to appear. Foul rubbish, rotten scraps, and ugly-smelling matter came up from inside the mortar and spilled out over the floor.

"What is this?" cried the greedy old man. "What a horrible smell." The old woman too covered her nose and stepped back in disgust. The more they pounded, the more filthy things came out, until the room was full of stink and dirt. Their hopes turned to anger in an instant.

The greedy old man lost his temper again, just as he had when he killed Shiro. "This wretched thing has made fools of us," he shouted. Then he struck the mortar again and again until it broke apart. At last he threw the broken pieces into the fire and burned them completely. Soon nothing was left but a pile of gray ashes.

Later, when the honest old man came to ask for the mortar back, he found only ashes in the greedy neighbor's house. He was shocked and saddened, because the mortar had been made from the tree planted in memory of Shiro. Still, there was nothing to be done now. So he gathered up the ashes carefully into a basket and carried them home with a heavy heart.

"Our Shiro's tree has become ashes," he said sadly to his wife. Then, still thinking with love of the dog they had lost, he went to Shiro's grave and scattered some of the ashes there. At that very moment, a soft warm wind came from somewhere and lifted the ashes into the air. The old man watched in surprise as they flew out over the garden. Then they fell lightly on the dead branches of trees standing nearby.

The moment the ashes touched them, the bare branches changed. Buds swelled, flowers opened, and before his eyes the withered trees burst into bloom. Though it was not yet the season for flowers, the garden suddenly looked like full spring.

The old man clapped his hands in delight. “How wonderful,” he said. “Even now, Shiro is still bringing us blessings.”

He was so pleased that he took the remaining ashes in a basket and walked about, singing as he went. “Blossom, old trees, blossom. Blossom, old trees, blossom,” he called in a cheerful voice. Just then a lord was passing nearby with many servants. He heard the strange song and stopped at once. Looking at the old man with interest, he said, “You there, make that dead cherry tree bloom before my eyes.”

The old man bowed and climbed quickly up the tree. Then he scattered the ashes over the branches while calling out in a lively voice. At once the dry branches were covered with flowers, and the whole tree became bright and beautiful. The lord was greatly amazed. “This is truly marvelous,” he said. He praised the old man warmly and gave him many gifts as a reward.

Of course, the greedy neighbor soon heard of this too, and once again envy burned inside him. He gathered up the ashes still left in his house, put them into a basket, and copied the honest old man’s song and manner. Then he too was seen by the lord and ordered to make a dead tree bloom. Full of false pride, he climbed up and threw the ashes wildly into the branches. But no flowers came.

Instead, a strong wind blew the ashes back into the faces of the lord and his servants. The ashes went into their eyes, noses, and mouths, and everyone began coughing, sneezing, and crying out in pain. The lord was furious and shouted, “This fellow is a liar.” The greedy old man begged forgiveness, but it was too late. He was seized and punished, while the honest old man and old woman lived on in peace, kindly and happily, always remembering their faithful Shiro with love.

The Old Man Who Lost His Lump [Kobutori]

Part 1

Long ago, in a certain place, there lived an old man who had a large lump hanging from his right cheek. It was soft and heavy, and it swung a little when he walked. Because of it, he often looked troubled and uncomfortable. It had been with him for so many years that people in the village thought of it as part of his face. Still, it was always in his way, and he wished he could be rid of it.

One day the old man went into the mountains to cut wood. At first the weather seemed ordinary, and he worked as he always did. But before long the sky suddenly changed, and a terrible storm broke out over the hills. Lightning flashed again and again, thunder rolled loudly, and heavy rain came pouring down. The old man could not go home in such weather, and so he looked around in great trouble.

Then he found a large hollow inside the trunk of an old tree. There was nothing else to do, so he climbed into it and waited for the rain to grow lighter. But the storm did not end quickly, and while he sat there in the dark, evening passed and night came on. The deep mountain became silent except for the rough voice of the storm moving through the trees. The old man was frightened and made himself as small as he could inside the hollow.

At last, around the middle of the night, the rain began to grow weaker. Then the storm suddenly stopped. Just after that, the old man heard something very strange. From high up in the mountain came the sound of many voices and many feet, all coming down together with great noise and laughter.

The old man had felt lonely and afraid for so long that at first he almost felt relieved to hear living voices. "At least someone is coming," he thought. So he slowly pushed his face out from the hollow tree and looked. But what he saw was not a group of men at all. It was a crowd of demons and strange creatures coming down the mountain in a long line.

Some wore blue robes and had red faces. Others wore red robes and had black

faces. Some had only one eye, and some had mouths or noses shaped in terrible ways. Lights shone before them like the bright eyes of wild animals in the dark. The old man was so shocked that he pulled his head back inside the hollow and shook all over with fear.

Before long the demons stopped right in front of the tree where he was hiding. Their chief sat down in the middle, and the others lined up on both sides of him. Then sake was brought out, cups were passed around, and they began a loud and cheerful feast. One after another, demons sang songs and danced before the chief. Some danced well and were praised, while others danced badly and made the whole company laugh.

The old man watched all this through a crack and slowly forgot some of his fear. He was by nature a merry and playful man, and before long he began to enjoy the sight as if he were watching a village show. Then the chief said, "Is there no one here who can do an even more unusual dance?" The moment the old man heard those words, his heart leaped. He suddenly wanted very much to jump out and dance.

At first he told himself not to be foolish. "If I go out, they may eat me in one bite," he thought. But the demons were clapping and shouting so happily that he could no longer stay still. At last he made up his mind. With his woodcutter's axe at his waist and his cap pulled low, he jumped out before the chief and cried, "Yo, korya korya," as he began to dance.

The demons were more surprised than he was. "What is this? A human old man," they shouted. But the old man did not stop. He stretched, bent, turned, hopped, and spun about with all his strength, moving left and right like a lively little creature of the woods. The demons were soon delighted, and they clapped harder and harder, shouting, "Well done. Keep going."

When the dance was over, the chief laughed loudly and said, "I have never seen such an amusing dance. Old man, come again tomorrow night and dance for us once more." The old man, now very bold, answered, "Gladly, gladly. Tonight was sudden, so I had no time to prepare. Tomorrow I will come even better." Then one demon said, "He may fail to return unless we keep something as a pledge." After

much talk, the chief cried, "Take the lump on his cheek. That must be the thing he values most." The old man pretended to be distressed, though inside he was overjoyed. A demon came near, twisted off the lump with one quick motion, and to the old man's great wonder it did not hurt at all. Just then dawn began to break, the demons vanished in haste, and the old man touched his face and found the great lump completely gone.

Part 2

The old man went home overjoyed, touching his smooth cheek again and again as he walked. For many years the lump had hung there and troubled him, and now it was gone as if it had never been. When he reached the village, people stared at his face in amazement. His family and neighbors gathered around him and asked what had happened. So the old man sat down and told them the whole strange story from beginning to end.

He spoke of the storm in the mountain, the hollow tree, the noisy coming of the demons, and the wonderful dance feast in the dark. Then he told how he had jumped out and danced before them, and how delighted they had been. Finally he explained how they had taken the lump from his cheek as a pledge for his return. Everyone who heard this opened their eyes wide and marveled at such a tale. Some laughed, some shook their heads, and all agreed that it was a strange piece of good fortune.

Among those who heard the story was another old man living nearby. He too had a lump, but his hung from the left cheek instead of the right. For many years he had been unhappy because of it, and when he saw that the first old man's face was now smooth and clear, envy filled his heart at once. He thought not of the danger or the fear of the mountain night. He thought only of how he too might lose his lump in the same easy way.

So he asked eagerly, "Tell me exactly where this happened. On what mountain was the tree? By which path did you go? Where did the demons gather?" The first old man, being simple and open-hearted, explained the road to him in detail. He

told him which valley to cross, which slope to climb, and where the great hollow tree stood. The other old man listened with burning attention and kept every word in his mind. By the time the tale was over, he had already decided what he would do.

“Then I too shall go there at once,” he said. “If those demons took your lump, they will surely take mine as well.” He imagined himself returning the next day with a smooth cheek and the admiration of all the village. But he did not think about one important thing. The first old man had danced from joy and natural spirit, without pretending to be something he was not. The second old man was going only out of greed.

So, as soon as he could, he climbed the mountain and made his way to the hollow tree. There he hid inside and waited impatiently for night to come. Just as the first old man had said, around midnight the noisy crowd of demons came down from the high mountain. They set up their feast before the tree, drank sake, laughed loudly, and began their dancing again. The second old man watched through the crack and trembled, but this time it was not only fear that shook him. It was also excitement and desire.

After some time the chief of the demons said, “What has happened to the old man who danced for us last night? Why has he not yet come?” Then other demons also cried out, “Yes, yes, where is he? Let him come quickly and dance again.” Hearing this, the old man in the tree said to himself, “Now is my chance.” So he jumped out in a hurry and stood before them.

One demon saw him first and shouted, “Ah, he has come. He has come.” The chief laughed and said, “Good. Come closer and dance again for us.” The old man, though badly frightened, stepped forward because he wanted so badly to lose the lump on his cheek. Then he began to dance. But what had seemed easy when he imagined it now became terribly hard.

He twisted his arms, stamped his feet, and flung himself about in all directions, but there was no life in it. His movements were clumsy, heavy, and ugly to watch. He did not dance from joy, and so his body would not move with any natural freedom. The more he tried to be lively, the worse he looked. Before long the

demons' faces grew dark with displeasure.

At last the chief cried angrily, "What is this miserable dancing? It is painful even to look at. Enough of this." The other demons also shouted, "Yes, enough. Stop at once." The old man froze in fear, no longer knowing what to do. Then the chief said, "There is no reason for us to keep waiting for such a poor performer. Give him back the thing we took yesterday and send him away."

At once one of the younger demons came forward holding the lump that had been removed from the first old man's cheek. "Here, take it back," he said. And before the old man could run or cry out, the demon struck it onto the side of his face where there had been no lump before. In a moment it stuck fast. So now he had one lump on the left cheek and another on the right.

The old man cried out in pain and shame, but there was nothing he could do. Dawn was already beginning, and the demons were disappearing in haste. So he stumbled down the mountain weeping, with two great lumps hanging from his face, one on either side. Thus the first old man was cured because he had danced out of simple cheer, while the second was punished because he had gone only from envy and greed.

Momotarō

Part 1

Long ago, in a certain place, there lived an old man and an old woman. Every day the old man went into the mountains to cut firewood, and every day the old woman went down to the river to wash clothes. Their life was simple and poor, but they lived in peace together. Still, there was one sadness in their hearts. They had no child, and the house often felt quiet and lonely because of that.

One day, while the old woman was washing clothes by the river, something strange came floating down from upstream. It was not a branch, and it was not a basket. It was a great peach, round and shining, much larger than any peach she had ever seen. As it bobbed on the water, it seemed almost to come dancing toward her. The old woman stared at it in wonder and said, “What a splendid peach. I must take it home for the old man.”

She bent down to catch it, but it was still too far from the bank. So she clapped her hands and sang to the water, calling the peach toward the sweeter side of the stream. The peach seemed to answer her song and came drifting closer and closer until at last it reached the place before her. Smiling happily, the old woman lifted it with both arms. It was heavy, but she was so pleased that she forgot the trouble. She put it together with her washing things and carried it home.

That evening the old man came back at last from the mountains with a bundle of wood on his back. The old woman welcomed him warmly and said, “Come in quickly. I have something fine to show you.” The old man laughed and asked, “What good thing is this?” Then the old woman brought out the great peach and set it before him. He opened his eyes wide and said, “This truly is a remarkable peach. Where in the world did you get it?”

The old woman told him how it had floated down the river, and the old man grew more and more amazed. He took the peach in both hands and turned it this way and that, admiring its size and shape. Then, just as the two of them were gazing at it, the peach suddenly split open with a soft popping sound. In the next

moment, from inside came the strong cry of a baby. A lively little boy jumped out before their eyes, full of health and spirit.

The old man and old woman were so surprised that they could only cry out together. But after the first shock, joy rose up in both their hearts. "We have always wished for a child," they said. "This must surely be a gift from the gods." They hurried about in great excitement, warming water, preparing baby clothes, and doing everything needed for a newborn child. Yet the baby was no weak or helpless little thing. Even from the start he was full of life and strength.

Because he had been born from a peach, they gave him the name Momotarō. Then they raised him with the deepest love and care. As he grew, it became clear that he was no ordinary child. He was much larger and stronger than other boys of his age, and when he wrestled with them, no one in the whole neighborhood could defeat him. Yet he was not rough or cruel. He was good-hearted, cheerful, and always respectful to the old man and old woman who had raised him.

Year by year he grew stronger still, until at last he became fifteen years old. By then there seemed to be no one in Japan who could match his strength. Because of this, a restless spirit began to rise in him. He wanted to go out into the wide world and test the power in his arms. He felt that his strength had been given to him for some great purpose and should not be wasted in an ordinary life.

Around that time, a traveler came back from distant islands and strange foreign places. After telling many unusual stories, he spoke of a far-off place called Oni Island, beyond the wide sea. There, he said, wicked ogres lived inside a hard iron castle and kept treasure stolen from many lands. When Momotarō heard this, his heart caught fire at once. He could not sit still any longer. The thought of going to that island and destroying the ogres filled his whole mind.

So as soon as he returned home, he went before the old man and bowed respectfully. "Please give me leave for a while," he said. The old man looked at him in surprise and asked, "Where do you mean to go?" Momotarō answered without hesitation, "I am going to Oni Island to defeat the ogres." The old man, though startled, was proud of his brave spirit and said, "That is a bold thing to do. Then go, and do it well."

The old woman too, though anxious, did not try to stop him. Instead she said, "If you must go so far, then you will need food for the road. I will make the best millet dumplings for you." So the old man and old woman brought out a great mortar into the middle of the yard and began pounding grain together. Before long the dumplings were ready, and Momotarō made his preparations as well. He put on a warrior's coat, fastened a sword at his waist, hung the bag of dumplings from his side, and took in his hand a war fan painted with a peach. Then he bowed deeply and said, "Father, Mother, I am going now." The old man said, "Go and defeat the ogres bravely," and the old woman said, "Take care not to be hurt." Momotarō smiled proudly and answered, "Do not worry. I carry the finest millet dumplings in Japan." Then he set out in high spirits, while the old man and old woman stood at the gate and watched him go for as long as they could.

Part 2

Momotarō walked on and on with a firm step, carrying the bag of millet dumplings at his side. His coat moved in the wind, his sword hung at his waist, and the peach-marked war fan shone brightly in his hand. He looked every bit like a young warrior setting out to do some great deed. Though the road stretched far ahead, he did not feel tired. His heart was too full of purpose and courage.

After he had gone some distance, a dog came running out from the side of the road. It was a strong-looking dog with sharp eyes and a lively step. Coming right up before Momotarō, it barked loudly and said, "Bow-wow. Who are you, and where are you going in such grand style?" Momotarō stopped and looked down at it without any fear or surprise. "I am Momotarō," he answered, "and I am going to Oni Island to defeat the ogres."

The dog's ears rose at once. "Oni Island?" it said. "That is a bold place to go. But tell me, what is hanging from your side?" Momotarō answered proudly, "These are the finest millet dumplings in Japan." The dog licked its lips and said, "If that is true, then please give me one." Momotarō looked at the dog carefully for a moment and then said, "I will give you one, but only if you become my

servant and go with me to Oni Island.”

The dog was delighted by these words. “Gladly, gladly,” it cried. “I will serve you with all my strength.” Then Momotarō opened the bag, took out one dumpling, and gave it to the dog. The dog ate it at once and found it so good that its eyes seemed to shine even more brightly than before. “This truly is the finest millet dumpling in Japan,” it said. From that moment on, it walked behind Momotarō as his first follower.

The two traveled on together in high spirits. Momotarō walked proudly in front, and the dog followed close behind like a faithful guard. Before long, however, another animal appeared on the road. This time it was a monkey, quick and sharp-faced, that came leaping down from the branches and stood in their way. Looking first at Momotarō and then at the dog, it asked in a curious voice, “Where are you all going in such a hurry?”

Momotarō answered just as before, “I am Momotarō, and I am going to Oni Island to defeat the ogres.” The monkey clapped its hands and said, “That sounds very interesting indeed. But what is that good smell coming from your bag?” The dog growled a little, but Momotarō remained calm and said, “These are the finest millet dumplings in Japan.” The monkey’s eyes grew wide. “Then please give me one too,” it said at once.

Momotarō replied, “I will give you one if you agree to become my servant and go with me to Oni Island.” The monkey did not think long. “I agree,” it cried. “I will surely be useful to you. Dogs may be strong, but monkeys are quick and clever.” At these words the dog gave a low bark as if to object, but Momotarō quieted both of them and handed a dumpling to the monkey. The monkey ate it eagerly and then fell in line beside the dog as the second of Momotarō’s followers.

For a while the dog and the monkey walked side by side, but soon they began to quarrel. The dog boasted of its strength and said that in battle it would be the first to rush at the ogres. The monkey laughed and answered that strength alone was not enough, and that clever hands and quick feet would be far more useful. Their voices grew sharper and sharper, and each tried to push ahead of the other. At last Momotarō stopped and turned back toward them.

“That will do,” he said firmly. “You are both now my servants. If you fight among yourselves, how can we hope to defeat the ogres?” The dog lowered its head, and the monkey also fell silent. Then Momotarō went on, “Each of you has your own gift. The dog has strength and courage. The monkey has speed and skill. If you work together, you will both be of great use.” Hearing this, the two felt ashamed and promised to get along better.

So the three continued on their way in better order than before. Then, after they had traveled still farther, a pheasant came flying down out of the sky and settled before them on the road. It tilted its head and looked at the three with bright sharp eyes. “Where are you going, all of you together?” it asked. Momotarō answered once more, “I am going to Oni Island to defeat the ogres.” The pheasant gave a cry of admiration and said, “Then you are indeed a brave young man.”

Before long the pheasant too noticed the bag at Momotarō’s side and asked for one of the millet dumplings. Just as with the others, Momotarō said, “I will give you one if you become my servant and go with me.” The pheasant agreed at once, saying that with its wings it could fly ahead, scout out danger, and peck even an ogre’s eyes if needed. Momotarō was pleased with this answer, and after giving it a dumpling, he accepted the pheasant as his third follower. So now, with the dog behind, the monkey beside, and the pheasant flying ahead or walking near at hand, Momotarō pressed on toward the sea, no longer a lone traveler but the leader of a true little army.

Part 3

At last Momotarō and his three followers came to the shore of the wide sea. The water stretched far away under the bright sky, and beyond it, somewhere in the distance, lay Oni Island. The sound of the waves was deep and steady, and the salt wind blew strongly against their faces. Momotarō stood on the sand and looked out with a firm calm gaze. “We are close now,” he said. “Beyond this water is the place where the ogres hide their stolen treasure.”

But there was no boat waiting there for them. So Momotarō and his followers

looked up and down the shore until they found a small fishing boat drawn onto the sand. It was not large, but it was strong enough to carry them if they used it well. Momotarō pushed it forward with both hands, and the dog and monkey helped, while the pheasant flew above them crying out sharply. Soon the boat slid into the water with a soft splash. Then Momotarō climbed in, and the others followed after him.

Once they were aboard, they set off across the sea. Momotarō took an oar, and the monkey and dog did what they could to help, while the pheasant flew above or rested for short times at the edge of the boat. The sea was not always calm. At moments the wind rose, and the little boat rocked hard from side to side. Yet Momotarō did not lose courage, and seeing his steady face, the others also kept their hearts firm.

As they moved farther from shore, the land behind them grew dimmer and dimmer, until at last it seemed only a faint line beneath the sky. Nothing was around them now but waves, wind, and light. The dog looked at the water with some uneasiness, and the monkey too became quieter than before. Only the pheasant seemed full of life, flying ahead and then circling back again. But even they said nothing of turning back, because all knew that their leader's purpose was fixed.

After a long time, the shape of an island rose before them out of the sea. At first it looked no more than a dark cloud above the water. Then, as they came closer, they could see steep rocks, black cliffs, and a hard iron gate shining far up above the shore. Beyond that gate stood the ogres' strong castle, built of iron and stone. It was a fearful sight, and even the wind around it seemed rougher and colder than before.

Momotarō brought the boat to land and stepped out first onto the shore of Oni Island. Then the dog jumped down, the monkey followed, and the pheasant came to rest on a rock nearby. For a few moments all four stood looking upward at the castle. Then Momotarō turned to his followers and said, "Now the true work begins. Each of you must use your strength well, and none of you must think only of yourself. If we fight as one, we will surely win."

The dog barked fiercely and said, "Leave the front attack to me. I will bite the ogres' legs and never let go." The monkey cried, "And I will climb wherever climbing is needed. If there are walls or gates to cross, I will go first." The pheasant lifted its wings and answered, "I will fly above them and strike at their eyes and faces. No ogre will fight easily while I am overhead." Momotarō listened and nodded with satisfaction. "Good," he said. "Remember those words, and do not fail me."

Then they began to climb toward the castle gate. The path was rough and steep, with sharp stones underfoot and thorny growth at the sides. At the top stood the great iron gate, shut fast and heavy as if no human strength could move it. From inside came harsh voices and the sound of laughter. Clearly the ogres did not yet know that enemies had reached their very island.

"How shall we enter?" asked the dog, baring its teeth impatiently. But the pheasant had already risen into the air and circled high above the wall. Looking down into the castle yard, it saw ogres moving about below, carrying clubs and cups, full of careless pride. The pheasant then flew back quickly and said, "There are many ogres inside, but they are not prepared. The gate is strong, yet the wall can be crossed." The monkey's eyes flashed at once. "Then leave it to me," it said.

The monkey climbed the wall with quick hands and feet, moving so lightly that hardly a stone was disturbed. Reaching the top, it slipped over to the inner side and dropped silently into the yard below. Then, while the pheasant flew low to distract the guards, the monkey hurried to the gate and worked at the fastening from within. In another moment there came a hard iron sound. Slowly, the great gate opened.

"Forward," cried Momotarō. At once he rushed in with sword and fan, the dog at his side and the pheasant above his head. The dog sprang first at the nearest ogre and bit hard into its leg. The creature howled and fell, dropping its iron club with a crash. Before it could rise, Momotarō struck it down with one strong blow.

Then the yard burst into noise and confusion. Ogres came running from every side, red ones, blue ones, and black-faced ones, roaring in anger and seizing heavy iron clubs. But the pheasant flew straight at their faces, pecking at eyes and

foreheads so sharply that many could not even lift their weapons properly. At the same time the monkey leaped upon their backs, scratched, struck, and pulled at their hair with furious speed. The dog rushed low among them again and again, tearing at legs and making them stumble.

In the middle of all this stood Momotarō, calm and fierce, striking wherever the fighting was hardest. His sword flashed in the light, and each blow fell true. Ogres who had long frightened others now found themselves driven back in fear. One cried out, “This is no ordinary boy.” Another shouted, “Beware the bird. Beware the dog.” But the attack only grew stronger, and the defenders of Oni Island began at last to lose heart.

Still, the battle was not over. From the inner part of the castle came the heaviest and fiercest ogres of all, carrying great iron bars and roaring like thunder. Behind them, somewhere deeper within, the chief of the ogres was said to be waiting. Momotarō tightened his grip upon his sword and looked ahead without fear. “Come,” he said to his followers. “We have broken the gate. Now let us defeat them completely.”

Part 4

Momotarō and his three followers rushed deeper into the ogres’ castle without slowing their step. The yard behind them was already full of fallen enemies, dropped clubs, and cries of pain. Yet ahead, from the inner hall, came the sound of heavier feet and louder voices. The greatest ogres of Oni Island were now coming out at last. They were taller and broader than the others, and each carried an iron bar so thick that an ordinary man could hardly have lifted it from the ground.

The leader of these great ogres stood in the middle of them, huge and terrible to see. His face was red as fire, his hair stood up like rough black grass, and two hard horns rose from his forehead. When he saw Momotarō cutting his way through the castle, he gave a shout like thunder and cried, “Who are you, that you dare to come into my stronghold?” Momotarō stepped forward without the least

fear and answered, “I am Momotarō of Japan. I have come to punish you for your evil deeds.”

The chief ogre roared with anger and raised his iron bar high in both hands. He swung it down with such force that the very air seemed to split. But Momotarō leaped aside in time, and the great bar crashed into the stones below him. At that same moment the dog sprang forward and bit hard into the ogre’s leg. The monkey leaped up onto his shoulder from behind, pulling at his hair and scratching at his neck, while the pheasant flew at his face and struck sharply at his eyes.

The great ogre howled and staggered back, shaking his huge body from side to side to throw them off. But Momotarō gave him no time to recover. He rushed in close and struck with his sword again and again, not wildly, but with firm and careful blows. Around them the lesser ogres still fought on, yet their courage was weakening fast. Wherever they looked, they saw their chief in trouble and the strange little army pressing forward without fear.

Soon the whole battle began to turn. One ogre, blinded by the pheasant’s sharp beak, dropped his club and ran. Another fell when the dog seized his ankle. Another was thrown down by the monkey from the top of a wall. And in the center of it all Momotarō moved like a young storm, driving the enemies back step by step. The ogres had long been strong enough to frighten and oppress others, but now they had met someone stronger, braver, and more just than themselves.

At last the chief of the ogres could endure no more. Wounded, confused, and near defeat, he dropped his iron bar with a heavy crash. Then he fell to his knees and raised both hands in surrender. “Spare me,” he cried. “Spare us, and we will never again trouble the people of Japan.” One after another, the other ogres also threw away their weapons and bowed their heads low. Their loud roars were gone now. They spoke only in frightened voices, begging for mercy.

Momotarō stood before them with his sword still in his hand. “If you truly repent,” he said, “then return all that you have stolen and swear never again to do evil.” The chief ogre nodded again and again and answered, “Yes, yes, we swear it. We will never again come to the lands of men. We will return every treasure and every good thing that we took.” Seeing that they were now fully beaten,

Momotarō lowered his sword. He had come not merely to kill, but to put an end to their wickedness.

Then the ogres led him and his followers into the treasure house. There were piles of gold and silver, coral and jewels, rich cloth, and many rare things gathered from distant lands. All these the ogres had stolen through violence and fear. Momotarō ordered that they should be brought out and loaded into carts and boats. His followers helped eagerly. The monkey climbed to high shelves and handed treasures down, the dog guarded the doorway, and the pheasant flew here and there to see that nothing was hidden away.

When everything had been gathered, Momotarō and his followers prepared to leave Oni Island. The ogres bowed low before them and promised once more that they would never again trouble the world of men. Then the little band went down to the shore, loaded the treasure into the boat, and set out across the sea. This time the journey felt lighter, because victory was with them. The wind seemed friendlier, the waves seemed calmer, and all four looked toward home with glad hearts.

At last they reached the shore of Japan again and traveled back with the treasures. Along the way, people who saw them cried out in wonder. They had heard of the ogres of Oni Island, but few had believed that anyone could truly defeat them. Yet here was Momotarō returning alive, with a dog, a monkey, and a pheasant at his side, and behind him wealth taken from the iron castle itself. His name spread quickly from village to village, and everyone praised his courage.

When Momotarō at last reached home, the old man and old woman ran out to meet him with tears of joy. They had feared for him every day, yet now they saw him safe and victorious before their eyes. Momotarō bowed to them deeply and said, “Father, Mother, I have returned.” Then he showed them the treasures he had brought back from Oni Island. From that time on, the old man and old woman lived in comfort and happiness, and Momotarō too was honored everywhere as a brave and righteous hero. Together with the faithful dog, clever monkey, and sharp-eyed pheasant, he had destroyed the power of the ogres and brought peace where there had once been fear.

The Monkey and the Crab [Saru Kani Gassen]

Part 1

Long ago, in a certain place, a crab was walking along a road with a rice ball in its claws. It was a fine round rice ball, white and soft, and the crab was very pleased with it. As it went slowly along, it kept looking at its prize and thinking about how good it would taste. The day was bright, and the road was quiet. It seemed like a very peaceful time.

But before long, a monkey came along from the other direction. The monkey had in its hand a persimmon seed. It was not a fine thing to look at, and by itself it could not be eaten at all. Yet the monkey turned it about proudly, as if it were something of great value. When it saw the crab's rice ball, its eyes quickly changed. At once it began to think of a way to get that good food for itself.

The monkey came near with a friendly face and said, "Good day, Mr. Crab. What a fine rice ball you have there." The crab answered simply, "Yes, it is a very good one." The monkey nodded and then held up the persimmon seed between its fingers. "And do you see this?" it said. "This is no ordinary thing. If you plant it, a great persimmon tree will grow, and in time it will bear many sweet fruits." The crab listened with interest, though it did not yet understand where the monkey's words were leading.

The monkey then said, "A rice ball is eaten only once, and then it is gone. But this seed, if you plant it, will one day give you fruit again and again. Year after year it will feed you, and you will have more persimmons than you can count. So let us exchange them. Give me the rice ball, and I will give you this wonderful seed." The crab looked down at its rice ball and then at the small hard seed. At first that seemed a poor exchange indeed.

Still, the crab was honest and rather simple in heart. The monkey's words sounded clever, and the thought of a whole tree full of fruit began to shine before its mind. "That is true," the crab said at last. "If I eat the rice ball, it will be gone in one meal. But if I plant the seed, I may enjoy fruit for many years." The monkey

quickly answered, “Exactly so. You understand well.” So at last the exchange was made.

The monkey snatched up the rice ball at once and stuffed it into its mouth with great satisfaction. It ate quickly, without giving even a small piece to the crab. Meanwhile the crab held the persimmon seed carefully, already thinking of the tree that would someday grow from it. The monkey, having gained the better part of the bargain, soon went on its way looking very pleased with itself. The crab also went home, not unhappy, but full of quiet hope for the future.

When the crab reached its home, it found a good place in the garden and planted the persimmon seed there. Then it watered the earth and patted the ground gently with its claws. “Grow well,” it said. “Grow quickly, and become a fine tree.” Each day after that, the crab came out to look at the place. At first nothing could be seen, and still it came. Because it had given up its rice ball for this seed, it cared very deeply about what would happen.

After some time, a little shoot finally pushed up through the earth. The crab was delighted and clapped its claws together with joy. “It has come up. It has truly come up,” it cried. From then on, it cared for the young tree even more carefully than before. It watered it when the days were dry, watched over it in wind and rain, and spoke to it as if it were a living child.

The little tree slowly grew, but the crab often became impatient. “Persimmon tree, grow quickly,” it would say. “Grow quickly, and bear fruit.” Sometimes it sang to the tree in a gentle voice, wishing to help it rise faster toward the sky. Day followed day, and month followed month, and the tree grew taller little by little. Its trunk became stronger, and its branches spread wider above the garden.

At last the tree became large enough to promise real fruit. Then one season, after blossoms had come and gone, little green persimmons appeared among the leaves. When the crab saw them, it was overjoyed beyond words. “At last, at last,” it said. “My tree has done what the monkey promised.” It looked up every day from below and watched the fruit grow larger and larger.

Yet there was one great trouble. The persimmons hung high on the branches, while the crab, with its short legs and broad body, could not climb a tree at all. No

matter how eagerly it looked up at the ripening fruit, it could not reach even one. Still it waited patiently, hoping that when they became fully ripe, some might fall to the ground on their own. But as the persimmons reddened in the sun and grew sweeter every day, another creature also noticed them. And so the time was drawing near when the crab's hard-won tree would bring not the joy it expected, but sorrow and anger instead.

Part 2

One day, just as the persimmons had grown red and beautiful, the monkey came by again. It looked up at the tree, saw the fruit hanging thick among the branches, and at once began to drool. "What splendid persimmons," it thought. "If such fruit was going to grow, I should never have traded the seed for that rice ball." The sight filled it with greed all over again. It wanted the fruit for itself just as it had once wanted the rice ball.

The crab saw the monkey standing there and said, "Monkey, instead of only staring, will you climb up and pick some for me? I cannot reach them, but I will gladly share the fruit with you." The monkey at once thought, "Good. This is just what I hoped for." But it did not show its greed openly. Instead it smiled and said, "Of course, of course. Wait there, and I will pick them for you."

Then the monkey quickly climbed up the persimmon tree. It moved easily from branch to branch and soon seated itself comfortably among the leaves. There it picked one fine red persimmon first of all and looked at it with delight. "What a sweet one this must be," it said aloud. Then, on purpose, it began to eat it slowly and noisily, making sure the crab below could see and hear everything.

The crab stood beneath the tree and watched with growing envy. "Hey, hey," it called up, "do not just eat by yourself. Hurry and throw some down here too." The monkey answered, "Yes, yes, I will," but it had no wish to be fair. Instead it picked a hard green persimmon and tossed it down. The crab caught it eagerly and tried to eat it, only to find that it was terribly bitter and made its mouth twist.

"No, no, that will not do," said the crab. "This one is far too bitter. Please throw

me a sweet ripe one.” The monkey only laughed to itself and answered again, “Yes, yes, here comes a better one.” But this time it picked an even greener persimmon and threw that down instead. The crab tasted it and found it worse than the first. “This one too is no good,” it cried. “Please give me a truly sweet one.”

Now the monkey grew tired of being asked again and again. “Very well,” it said in an angry voice. “Then take this one.” With that, it chose the hardest and greenest persimmon of all. The crab, trusting that at last a good fruit was coming, lifted its face and looked upward with its claws half raised. Then the monkey hurled the hard persimmon down with all its strength, aiming straight at the crab’s head.

The persimmon struck the crab’s shell with terrible force. The poor crab gave a single cry, and then its shell was broken and it fell still beneath the tree. The monkey looked down and said, “That serves you right.” After that it calmly picked and ate all the sweet ripe persimmons one after another. When it had eaten until it could hardly move, it gathered up as many as it could carry in both arms and hurried away without even once looking back.

Some time later, the young crab came home. It had gone to play with friends at the little stream behind the house and knew nothing of what had happened. But when it came near the persimmon tree, it saw its mother lying beneath it with the shell broken and life gone. At once the child crab was shocked beyond words. It burst into tears and cried loudly over the body.

While it wept, it looked carefully around and began to understand the truth. The tree, which had so recently been full of fine ripe fruit, was now almost empty. Only a few hard green bitter persimmons remained on the branches. Seeing this, the young crab cried, “Then it was the monkey. The monkey killed my mother and took all the persimmons away.” Its grief now mixed with burning anger, and it wept all the more bitterly.

Just then a chestnut came bouncing along and asked, “Crab, Crab, why are you crying?” The young crab told how the monkey had killed its mother and how it wished to take revenge. “What a hateful monkey,” said the chestnut. “Very well, I will help you.” Soon after that, a bee came buzzing by, then a piece of kelp came

slipping along, and then a mortar came rolling over. To each of them the young crab told the same sad story, and each one answered, "What a hateful monkey. We too will help you take revenge."

At last the young crab stopped crying so hard, because it was no longer alone in its sorrow. The chestnut, the bee, the kelp, the mortar, and the child crab all gathered together and began to discuss how they might punish the monkey properly. They knew the monkey was cunning and strong, so they could not simply rush at it without a plan. Instead they sat close together and talked until a scheme began to take shape. Thus, beside the dead crab and beneath the tree that had caused so much sorrow, the avengers prepared themselves for the day of repayment.

Part 3

After they had spoken together for a long time, the young crab and its four helpers finally settled on a plan. They knew that the monkey was strong, quick, and clever, and that it would be hard to defeat if they attacked carelessly in the open. So they decided to go to the monkey's house and wait there in hiding until the right moment came. Each of them chose a place where it could strike best. In that way, they hoped to make the monkey suffer blow after blow before it could understand what was happening.

So the mortar, the kelp, the bee, and the chestnut all went together, and the young crab went with them. When they reached the monkey's house, they found that he was not there. It seemed that after eating many persimmons, he had gone off to the hills to play and walk about until evening. "That is just as well," said the mortar. "While he is away, we can hide ourselves properly and wait." Everyone agreed that this was the best thing to do.

Then they went inside and looked carefully around the monkey's house. The chestnut was the first to choose its place. "I will hide here," it said, and with that it slipped down into the ashes of the hearth. There it lay buried, waiting for the moment when heat and anger would send it jumping upward. It was a good place

for the first attack, because the monkey would surely come near the hearth when it returned home.

Next the bee chose its place. "I will hide here," it said, and it flew over to the shadow beside the water jar. There it stayed where no eye would easily notice it. The kelp then stretched itself long across the threshold and said, "I will lie here." Its body was soft and quiet, and in the dim light it looked like nothing of any danger at all. Last of all, the mortar climbed up high above the room and settled on the beam overhead, saying, "When the time comes, I will fall from here."

The young crab did not rush to the center of things. It had suffered most deeply and wanted the last blow for itself. So it hid quietly in a corner of the garden, close enough to come in at the final moment, but far enough that the monkey would not notice it too soon. Then all of them waited in silence. The house grew darker and darker as evening came down. Outside, the air cooled, and the road before the house became quiet.

At last, when the day was nearly over, the monkey came back. He looked tired from playing in the hills, but his face still had the careless pride of one who had done a cruel thing and feared no punishment for it. He came into the house, sat down heavily by the hearth, and said, "Ah, my throat is dry." He had eaten many persimmons, and now he wanted something warm to drink. So, without any thought of danger, he stretched out his hand toward the kettle at once.

The moment he did so, the chestnut burst out from the ashes with a loud pop. It sprang straight up like a hot stone shot from the fire and struck the monkey hard on the nose with all its force. "Hot," cried the monkey. The pain was sudden and sharp, and he clutched his face with both hands. With a loud scream he jumped up from the hearth and ran in confusion toward the kitchen, thinking only of cooling the place that burned.

But the trouble had only begun. In his pain, the monkey thrust his face toward the water jar, hoping to soothe the burn. At once the bee flew out from the shadow with an angry buzzing sound. It shot straight at the monkey and stung him above the eye again and again, so sharply that he cried out, "It hurts. It hurts." Now pain burned in two places at once, and his fear grew greater than before. He no longer

knew what enemy had struck him or from where the next blow would come.

In blind panic he rushed toward the front of the house, trying to escape into the open air. But as he fled, his foot came down on the kelp stretched across the threshold. At once he slipped with great force and fell flat on his belly. Before he could rise again, the mortar dropped from the beam above with a heavy crash and landed on top of him. The monkey groaned and writhed beneath the terrible weight. His red face turned redder still, and he beat the floor with his hands and feet in helpless pain.

Then, at that very moment, the young crab came creeping out from the corner of the garden. It entered slowly but without any fear, for now the monkey could no longer fight back. Standing before him, it said, "Do you remember the enemy of my mother?" The monkey groaned and looked up in terror, but he had no answer ready. The young crab raised its claws high. Then, with all the anger and sorrow it had carried in its heart, it seized the monkey by the neck.

Thus the monkey, who had cheated the crab of the rice ball, stolen the sweet persimmons, and killed the mother crab with a hard green fruit, received at last the punishment for all his wickedness. The young crab had not stood alone, but had been helped by the chestnut, the bee, the kelp, and the mortar, each striking in its proper turn. In this way the revenge was completed, and the debt of blood was paid back. People say that from that time on, the tale was told as a warning that greed, cruelty, and clever lies may bring quick gain for a while, but in the end they call punishment down upon the one who uses them.

The Tongue-Cut Sparrow [Shitakiri Suzume]

Part 1

Long ago, in a certain place, there lived an old man and an old woman. They had no child, and because of that, the house often felt quiet and lonely. The old man loved a little sparrow and kept it carefully in a cage, feeding it and speaking to it kindly every day. He treated the small bird almost like a child of his own. The sparrow also seemed to trust him and stayed lively and happy under his care.

One day, as usual, the old man went to the mountain to gather brushwood. The old woman stayed at home and was washing clothes by the well. For the washing she had prepared some starch paste, but by mistake she left it in the kitchen while she went out again. During that time the little sparrow came hopping out from its cage. It moved about the room in its quick light way and soon found the dish of paste.

The sparrow did not know that it was doing anything wrong. Seeing the white paste there, it began to peck and lick at it little by little. Before long it had eaten all of it. When the old woman came back to fetch the paste, she saw at once that the dish was empty. Looking around, she quickly understood what had happened. The sight made her very angry.

The old woman was hard-hearted and sharp in temper. She caught the poor little sparrow and forced its beak open. “So it was this tongue that did such a bad thing,” she cried. Then, without pity, she cut off the sparrow’s tongue with her scissors. The little bird cried out in pain and fear. After that, the old woman drove it from the house.

“Now get out,” she said harshly. “Go wherever you like.” The sparrow flew away in great sorrow, crying in its small voice as it went. Its pain was sharp, and it had no place to rest. The old woman, however, did not feel sorry for it. She only muttered angrily about the lost paste and went back to her work.

In the evening the old man returned at last from the mountain with a bundle of brushwood on his back. He was tired, but as he came in he said cheerfully, “Ah, I

am tired. The sparrow must be hungry too. Let us give it some food.” Speaking in this warm way, he went to the cage. But when he looked inside, the little sparrow was nowhere to be seen.

The old man was greatly surprised. “Old woman, old woman,” he called, “where has the sparrow gone?” The old woman answered in a calm voice, as if nothing of importance had happened. “That sparrow licked up my precious paste, so I cut its tongue and drove it out,” she said. The old man stared at her in shock. His face fell at once.

“What a cruel thing to do,” he said sadly. “That poor little bird.” He could not stop thinking of the sparrow’s pain and fear. All evening his heart was heavy, and he felt no peace at all. The little bird he had loved and cared for was now lost somewhere outside, wounded and alone.

He thought of the sparrow again and again through the night. Had it found a place to hide? Was it still crying in pain? Was it hungry, cold, or afraid? The more he imagined such things, the more troubled he became. So even before the next day had fully begun, he had already made up his mind that he must go and look for it.

Part 2

Early the next morning, the old man set out to look for the little sparrow. He was too worried to stay at home even one more hour. Leaning on his staff, he walked along roads and paths, calling again and again in a gentle voice, “Tongue-cut sparrow, little sparrow, where is your home? Chiu, chiu, chiu.” He crossed fields and streams, went over one hill and then another, and still he kept calling. Though he was old, he did not stop, because his heart was full of concern.

At last he came to a place where a thick bamboo grove stood rustling softly in the wind. Just then, from somewhere inside it, a small voice answered him. “Tongue-cut sparrow, little sparrow, my home is here. Chiu, chiu, chiu.” The old man’s face brightened with joy at once. He hurried toward the sound as quickly as his legs would carry him. There, hidden among the bamboo, he saw a pretty

little house.

At the gate of that house stood the sparrow whose tongue had been cut. The moment it saw the old man, it came out gladly to meet him. “Oh, old man, welcome. I am so happy that you came,” it said. The old man too was deeply relieved and answered, “Ah, there you are. I missed you so much that I came all this way to find you.” The sparrow bowed again and again and then led him kindly inside.

Once he was seated, the sparrow spoke with deep regret. “Old man, I am truly sorry,” it said. “I did a foolish thing and licked the paste. Because of that, I caused trouble in your house.” The old man shook his head at once and said, “No, no. I was not at home, and because of that, you suffered such a cruel thing. I am only glad to see that you are alive.” Hearing these gentle words, the little sparrow was more pleased than ever.

Then it hurried about to prepare a fine meal for him. Before long many sparrows gathered, and together they brought out all kinds of food and drink. They served the old man kindly and invited him to eat as much as he wished. The room became lively and cheerful, full of small voices and quick wings. Though he had come there with a worried heart, the old man soon found himself smiling.

After the meal, the sparrows began to sing and dance for him. Some sang in sweet little voices, and others danced lightly across the floor. The old man watched with delight and laughed aloud again and again. It was such a warm and joyful welcome that he almost forgot all the trouble of the day before. For a long while he stayed there happily, talking with the sparrow and enjoying the kindness shown to him.

But as the sun began to go down, the old man remembered that he must return home. “I have been very happy here,” he said, “but now it is getting late, and I had better be going.” The sparrow and the others were sorry to hear this, yet they understood. “Then please wait just a moment,” said the tongue-cut sparrow. “We must give you something before you leave.”

Soon it brought out two wicker baskets and set them before him. One was large and heavy-looking, and the other was small and light. “Here are farewell gifts,”

said the sparrow. "Please choose whichever one you like." The old man looked at the two baskets quietly. He was not a greedy man, and besides that, he was old and not very strong.

"Then I will take the smaller one," he said. "The large one looks too heavy for an old man like me to carry." The sparrow nodded and said, "As you wish." It placed the light basket gently on his back and walked with him as far as the gate. There it bowed politely and said, "Please come again." The old man thanked the little sparrow from his heart and then started for home.

As he walked back, the basket did not trouble him very much, and so he was able to go along at a steady pace. The evening air was cool, and the sky slowly darkened above the hills. He thought again and again of the kindness of the sparrow and of the lively little house hidden in the bamboo grove. "I am glad I went," he said to himself. "I was able to see that dear little bird again."

At last he reached home safely with the basket still on his back. The old woman saw him and at once stared at what he was carrying. "What is that?" she asked sharply. The old man set the basket down and said, "It is a gift from the tongue-cut sparrow. I went to visit it today." Then, full of quiet happiness and simple gratitude, he prepared to open the little basket and see what was inside.

Part 3

When the old man opened the light basket at home, he and the old woman both gave cries of surprise. Inside were gold coins, silver pieces, coral, jewels, and many other precious things packed tightly together. What had looked so small and easy to carry held riches beyond anything they had expected. The old man was deeply thankful and said again and again, "How kind that little sparrow was." Even the old woman, sharp in nature though she was, could not help staring with wide eyes at the treasures before her.

But her wonder did not become gratitude. Instead, greed quickly rose in her heart. She thought not of the sparrow's kindness or of the old man's long journey to see it. She thought only of the second basket, the one that had looked larger and

heavier. "If the light one held so much," she said to herself, "then the heavy one must hold far more." From that moment on, she could think of nothing else.

So the very next day she set out by herself to find the sparrow's house. She did not go because she missed the bird or felt sorry for having cut its tongue. She went only because she wanted treasure. Leaning on a stick and hurrying as much as she could, she followed the road the old man had described. All the way she kept calling, "Tongue-cut sparrow, little sparrow, where is your home? Chiu, chiu, chiu."

At last she too reached the bamboo grove. From inside it came the same little answering voice as before. "Tongue-cut sparrow, little sparrow, my home is here. Chiu, chiu, chiu." The old woman hurried toward the sound and soon found the small house hidden among the bamboo. There the tongue-cut sparrow came out to meet her politely, just as it had greeted the old man.

"Welcome," said the sparrow gently. "You have come a long way." The old woman did not answer with warmth or shame. She only looked around quickly and said, "Yes, yes, that is enough. I did not come here to sit long. I have only come to receive a present and go home again." The sparrow was a little troubled by such words, yet it remained polite and brought her inside.

The sparrow tried to offer her food and drink, just as it had done for the old man. "Please rest first," it said. "You must be tired from walking." But the old woman would not settle down peacefully. She kept glancing about with restless eyes and said, "No, no, I have no need of that. Stop troubling yourself and bring out the farewell gifts at once." Hearing this, the sparrow understood clearly that the woman had come only out of greed.

Still, without anger, it went to the back and brought out the two baskets. One was light and one was heavy, just as before. "Please choose whichever one you like," said the sparrow. The old woman did not hesitate even for a moment. "Naturally, I will take the heavy one," she cried. Then she lifted it onto her back and, without waiting for further kindness or thanks, hurried away as fast as she could.

At first she was pleased beyond measure. Though the basket was so heavy that

it bent her back and made her shoulders ache, she thought, “This is good. It must be full of wonderful things.” Yet as she went along, the load seemed to grow heavier and heavier. At last she could bear the weight no longer. “There is no need to wait until I get home,” she said to herself. “I will open it here and look inside at once.”

So she sat down by the roadside, set the heavy basket before her, and quickly lifted the lid. But the moment it opened, terrible things burst out. Ugly spirits, one-eyed goblins, many-eyed little monsters, and all kinds of strange and frightening creatures came leaping and flying into the air. Some made dreadful faces, some cried in harsh voices, and some rushed straight at the old woman as if they meant to swallow her whole. The sight was so horrible that she nearly lost her senses.

“Help, help,” she screamed. “What a terrible thing.” She dropped the basket and fled in panic, running as fast as her old legs would carry her. The creatures chased after her, making ugly sounds and showing their fearful faces, until she was half dead with fright. Only after she had stumbled and run a great distance did they finally disappear. By the time she reached home, she was pale, shaking, and hardly able to breathe.

When the old man saw her in that state, he asked what had happened. The old woman told him everything between gasps, and then cried, “I have suffered terribly.” The old man listened and said in a calm, grave voice, “That is what comes of greed. You should not have gone there only to demand gifts.” From that day on, the old woman no longer spoke proudly of treasure from the sparrow’s house. And so the kind old man was rewarded for his gentle heart, while the greedy old woman learned, through fear and shame, that selfish desire brings only trouble in the end.

Kachi-Kachi Mountain [Kachikachi Yama]

Part 1

Long ago, in a certain place, there lived an old man and an old woman. They were poor, but they worked honestly and lived in a quiet little house near a field and a low mountain. Each day the old man went out to the field and worked hard from morning until evening. He planted, weeded, and watched over the small things he grew with great care. The old woman stayed at home and helped in all the ways she could.

But behind their house, in the mountain just beyond the field, there lived an old tanuki. This tanuki was not a harmless creature at all. Again and again it came down from the mountain and caused trouble for the old man. It trampled the field, spoiled the crops, and behaved as if the land belonged to it. Even worse, when the old man bent over his work, the tanuki threw stones and clods of dirt at him from behind.

At first the old man could hardly believe such a thing was happening. He would feel something strike his back or shoulder, turn around in anger, and see the tanuki already running away with quick little steps. "You wretched beast," he would cry, and then chase after it as fast as he could. But the tanuki was quick and sly, and it always escaped into the brush before he could catch it. Then, after a while, it would come back and begin its tricks again.

So the days passed in constant trouble. The old man worked with patience, but his patience was tested more and more. There was no peace in the field anymore, because he never knew when another stone would come flying at him or when the crops he had raised with such effort would be ruined again. The tanuki seemed to take special pleasure in his anger and helplessness. That made the old man feel even more bitter.

At last he said to himself, "This cannot go on forever. If I leave things as they are, that evil tanuki will destroy everything I have worked for." So he began to think carefully about how to catch it. He knew that if he only chased it, he would

never succeed. The tanuki was too quick, and the mountain gave it too many places to hide. So instead of running after it again, the old man prepared a trap.

He chose the place with care and set the trap where the tanuki often came to do its mischief. Then he went home and waited, though his heart was full of hope and worry together. One day passed, then another, and he kept wondering whether the beast had noticed the danger. But then, at last, the day came when his patience was rewarded. The tanuki, bold as always, came down again and ran straight into the trap.

The moment the old man found it there, he gave a cry of joy. “Ah, serves you right,” he said. “At last I have caught you.” The tanuki twisted and struggled, but the more it fought, the more firmly it was held. The old man quickly tied all four of its legs and lifted it up. He was tired from work and anger, yet he felt lighter than he had in many days.

Carrying the bound tanuki on his back, he took it home at once. The old woman came out when she heard him and stared in surprise to see what he had brought. The old man laughed with grim satisfaction and said, “Look at this. It is the beast that has ruined my field and thrown stones at me again and again. Today we will finally put an end to its wickedness.” The old woman too felt that a long trouble had at last been brought under control.

The old man then tied the tanuki up securely and hung it from one of the beams of the ceiling so it could not escape. The creature swung there helplessly in the air, glaring down with uneasy eyes. The old man looked up at it and said, “Now you may hang there and think about all the evil you have done.” Then he turned to the old woman and gave her careful instructions. “Watch it closely,” he said. “Do not let it escape. By the time I come back from the field this evening, make tanuki soup ready for supper.”

The old woman nodded and answered, “Very well. Leave it to me.” She believed the creature was so tightly bound that there was no danger now. The old man too felt satisfied, because he thought the matter was nearly finished at last. So he took up his tools again and went back to the field to do the rest of the day’s work. Behind him, in the house, the tanuki still hung from the beam, silent for the

moment, but with its sharp little mind already beginning to move.

Left alone in the house with the old woman, the bound tanuki watched everything from above with narrow careful eyes. Below it, the old woman brought out a mortar and began pounding grain in her usual steady way. The room was quiet except for the sound of her work and the small creaking of the rope. It looked as if the old man's trouble had finally ended and the wicked beast had truly lost. But in fact the most terrible part of the story had not yet begun.

Part 2

Left alone in the house, the tanuki soon began to speak in a soft and pitiful voice. "Old woman, old woman," it said, "please loosen these ropes just a little. My legs hurt terribly, and I can hardly bear the pain." The old woman looked up at it and answered, "No, no. The old man told me clearly not to let you go." Then she returned to her work and kept pounding grain in the mortar. But the tanuki did not stop begging.

Again and again it cried, "Please, only a little. I will not run away. I only want to stretch my legs for a moment." The old woman was not as cautious as the old man had been, and she was also rather simple in heart. Since the tanuki now spoke so humbly and seemed so helpless, she slowly began to feel sorry for it. "Perhaps it cannot escape so easily after all," she thought. At last, after much begging, she stepped forward and loosened the ropes.

The moment the last rope came free, the tanuki dropped lightly to the floor. "Ah, that feels better," it said. Then it looked at the old woman and spoke in an even gentler voice than before. "You have worked hard all day," it said. "Please let me pound the grain for you in return. I have caused trouble before, but now I wish to make myself useful." The old woman, hearing such polite words, thought, "It seems this creature has finally learned its lesson."

"Very well, then," she said, stepping aside from the mortar. "If you truly wish to help, then pound the grain for a while." But the tanuki had no thought of helping. The instant the old woman turned her back, it seized the heavy pestle in both paws

and struck her with all its strength. The poor old woman gave a cry and fell to the floor. Before she could rise again, the tanuki struck once more, and this time she lay still forever.

The house became terribly quiet. The tanuki stood over the body and laughed in a low cruel way. "So," it said, "now let the old man come home. I will give him a supper he will never forget." Then, using its strange power, the tanuki changed its form. In a moment it looked exactly like the old woman, with the same face, the same clothes, and the same voice. No one who came in at a glance would have seen the difference.

After that, the tanuki set about cooking. It cut up the poor old woman's body and made a soup from it, placing the pot over the fire as if preparing an ordinary evening meal. The smell rose through the house, and when the tanuki tasted it, it grinned with ugly satisfaction. Then it sat quietly, still in the shape of the old woman, and waited for the old man to return from the field. Outside, the light slowly faded, and the evening came on.

At last the old man came home, tired from work and carrying his tools upon his shoulder. As he entered, he called cheerfully, "Old woman, I have come back. Is the tanuki soup ready?" The tanuki, using the old woman's voice, answered, "Yes, yes, it is ready. Sit down at once and eat while it is hot." The old man, suspecting nothing, sat by the hearth. He was hungry from the day's labor and pleased to think the trouble of the tanuki was now over.

The tanuki served him the soup, and the old man ate it with satisfaction. "This is very good," he said. "It tastes better than I expected." The tanuki sat nearby, watching him and waiting for the moment when it could no longer keep its secret. At last, when the bowl was nearly empty, it suddenly burst into loud laughter. The sound was not like the old woman's voice at all, but sharp and ugly and wild.

The old man looked up in surprise. Then, before his eyes, the figure of the old woman changed. In a moment the tanuki stood there in its true shape, dancing about the room and beating its belly with its paws. "Old man, old man," it cried in delight, "that was no tanuki soup you ate. It was your own old woman made into soup." Then it leaped toward the door, still laughing and singing in a mocking

voice.

For a moment the old man could hardly understand what he had heard. Then the truth struck him like a blow. His bowl fell from his hands, and he rushed after the tanuki with a terrible cry. But the creature was already out of the house and running fast toward the mountain. The old man chased it as best he could, yet grief and shock had robbed him of his strength. In only a short time the tanuki vanished into the brush, leaving the old man behind.

Then the old man returned to the house, and there he found the truth with his own eyes. His poor wife was gone, and all that remained told too clearly what had happened. He wept bitterly and beat his hands upon the floor, crying out in loneliness and sorrow. He had lost not only his wife, but had been made to eat from the very crime itself, and this cruel shame cut even more deeply into his heart. His crying was heard by a rabbit that lived nearby and often spoke kindly with the old man.

The rabbit came and asked, "Old man, why are you crying so bitterly?" When it heard the whole dreadful story, its face grew hard with anger. "What a wicked tanuki," it said. "Such evil must not go unpunished." Then it bowed before the old man and added, "Do not weep forever. I will take revenge for your wife." The old man looked up through his tears, and though sorrow still filled him, a small hope entered his heart. Thus, after the tanuki's terrible crime, the rabbit took upon itself the duty of punishment, and the path of revenge began at last.

Part 3

After hearing the old man's story, the rabbit went at once to see the tanuki. It did not show anger openly at first. Instead it spoke in a friendly voice and behaved as if nothing were wrong. The tanuki, who was sly by nature, looked at the rabbit with some caution at first. But when it saw no sign of blame or threat, it slowly began to relax.

"Tanuki, Tanuki," said the rabbit, "the weather is fine today. Shall we go together into the mountain and gather brushwood?" The tanuki thought this

sounded pleasant enough, and since it did not know that the rabbit had promised revenge, it agreed at once. "Yes, let us go," it said. So the two of them went up into the mountain side by side. The rabbit spoke cheerfully as it walked, and the tanuki began to think it had found a new companion.

Once they reached the mountain, they gathered a great amount of dry brushwood. The rabbit worked quickly and tied its bundle neatly with cord. The tanuki also tied up a large load and lifted it onto its back. Soon both of them were ready to go down again. The path was quiet, and the dry wood made a soft rustling sound as they walked.

As they came down the mountain, the rabbit secretly took out a flint and steel. While the tanuki walked ahead with its great load of dry brushwood on its back, the rabbit struck the flint softly again and again. At last a spark caught in the bundle. A little smoke rose first, and then a small flame began to creep through the dry sticks. The tanuki did not notice it at once and kept walking on.

Before long the fire grew stronger, and the brushwood began to crack and pop. "Kachi-kachi," it sounded as the flame moved through the dry sticks. The tanuki turned its head a little and asked, "Rabbit, Rabbit, what is that kachi-kachi sound I hear behind me?" The rabbit answered at once, "This is Kachi-Kachi Mountain. The birds, beasts, and trees here all make kachi-kachi sounds." The tanuki, simple in that moment, believed the lie and kept going.

But the fire climbed higher and burned hotter and hotter. Soon it reached the tanuki's back and began to scorch the skin beneath the load. Now the poor creature could feel the heat clearly. "Rabbit, Rabbit, my back is terribly hot," it cried. The rabbit answered, "That is only the warmth of Kachi-Kachi Mountain." Yet in another moment the pain became unbearable, and the tanuki shouted and ran wildly, trying to throw the burning load off.

By then the whole bundle was on fire, and the tanuki's back was badly burned. It rolled on the ground and cried out in pain, while the rabbit stood by and watched with cool satisfaction. "This is the beginning of your punishment," the rabbit thought, though it did not speak those words aloud. At last the fire died down, but the tanuki was left with a great burn across its back. Groaning and half senseless,

it dragged itself away and hid in a dark hole.

On the next day, the rabbit mixed red pepper and miso together and made a very sharp paste. Then it carried the mixture to the place where the tanuki lay groaning in pain. “Tanuki, Tanuki,” it said in a kind voice, “I heard that your back was badly burned, so I made the best medicine for you and brought it here.” The tanuki, still suffering greatly, was overjoyed to hear this. “How kind you are,” it said. “Please, put it on quickly.”

The rabbit told it, “This is a very strong medicine, and it will cure even a terrible burn.” Then the tanuki turned over and showed its scorched back, red and raw from the fire. The rabbit took the pepper miso and spread it thickly over the wound without the least pity. For a brief moment the tanuki thought the cool paste might help. But in the next instant the sharp red pepper bit into the burned flesh like new fire.

“It hurts. It hurts,” cried the tanuki, rolling over and over on the ground. The pain was even worse than before, and it could hardly breathe from the shock of it. The rabbit watched with a small smile and said, “The worst pain comes only at the beginning. It will surely get better soon, so you must endure a little.” Then, leaving the tanuki twisting in agony, it calmly went away. The tanuki could do nothing but writhe in the darkness, feeling as if its back had caught fire for a second time.

In this way the rabbit slowly and carefully repaid the evil done to the old man and old woman. It did not rush in anger and waste its chance. Instead it made the tanuki suffer step by step, first with burning wood and then with burning medicine. Yet the revenge was not finished even then. The rabbit was already planning one last trick, and this final one would send the wicked tanuki to the bottom of the water.

Part 4

Several days passed after the rabbit had burned the tanuki’s back and rubbed sharp pepper paste into the wound. Then one day the rabbit said to itself, “The

tanuki's burns must have healed a little by now. This time I will lead it out to the sea and finish the matter there." So it went once more to visit the tanuki. The wicked creature had suffered greatly, but it was still alive, and in its weak heart there was still no true goodness.

"Tanuki, Tanuki," said the rabbit in a pleasant voice, "are you feeling better now?" The tanuki answered, "Yes, thanks to your medicine, I am much improved." The rabbit nodded as if pleased and then said, "That is good. Then shall we go somewhere together again? We have climbed mountains enough. This time let us go out to the sea. At the shore we may catch fish and enjoy the day." The tanuki, forgetting caution once more, thought this sounded delightful.

"Yes, yes, let us go," it said. So the rabbit and the tanuki went together to the seashore. The day was bright, the water shone far out under the sky, and a cool wind moved over the waves. The tanuki looked out at the sea with interest, because it had not often gone there. The rabbit, however, had already decided every step of what it meant to do.

When they reached the shore, the rabbit began making a small boat from wood. It cut and shaped the pieces carefully, tying them together well until the little craft was neat and strong. The tanuki watched with envy and said, "That is a fine boat. I too will make one." So, wishing not to be beaten by the rabbit, it made a boat of its own. But instead of using wood, it built it from mud.

When both boats were finished, the rabbit climbed into its wooden boat, and the tanuki climbed into its boat of mud. Then they pushed off from the shore and began to move out over the water. "What lovely weather," said the rabbit. "What a fine sea," said the tanuki. For a little while they spoke lightly and looked about with pleasure, as if they were only two friends taking a happy outing together.

But after a short time the rabbit said, "There seem to be no fish here. Let us go farther out." The tanuki agreed at once. "Yes, farther out," it said. Then the rabbit added, "And let us see which of us has the faster boat." The tanuki, not wanting to lose in anything, cried, "Good, good. Let us race." So the two began to row harder.

The rabbit struck the water quickly with its paddle and moved along in its light

wooden boat with great ease. Looking back, it called, "How is it? My wooden boat is light and fast, is it not?" The tanuki, unwilling to admit defeat, beat the water with all its strength and answered, "My mud boat is heavy and steady. It is excellent." For a little while it still believed those proud words.

But as they went farther out, the sea began to work upon the mud boat. Little by little water soaked into it. The sides softened, the edges broke, and the bottom began to melt away beneath the tanuki. At last the creature noticed that the boat was falling apart. "Oh no," it cried. "This is terrible. My boat is breaking."

The rabbit turned and looked back with cool eyes. The tanuki, now in real fear, splashed wildly and shouted, "Rabbit, Rabbit, help me." But the rabbit only answered, "Serve you right. You wicked beast killed the old woman by trickery and made the old man eat her in soup. This is the punishment for your evil." Hearing these words, the tanuki understood at last that all the rabbit's kindness had been the path of revenge.

Still the tanuki begged desperately. "Please save me. I will never do such a thing again." But the boat was already crumbling away faster and faster. In another moment the mud sides collapsed completely, and the tanuki fell into the water. It thrashed about, cried for help, and tried with all its strength to keep its head above the waves, but there was nothing left to hold it up.

The rabbit watched as the water closed over the struggling creature. The tanuki cried out once more, but soon its voice grew faint. Then it sank lower and lower until at last it disappeared beneath the sea. In this way the wicked tanuki, who had tormented the old man, killed the old woman, and laughed at their grief, received the final punishment for its crimes. The rabbit had carried out its revenge from beginning to end, and from that time on people told the tale of Kachi-Kachi Mountain as a warning that cruel tricks and evil deeds do not escape repayment forever.