

"No, I'm afraid not. But I do remember a little of *Katasawara* because I rehearsed it so much."

The boy began to dance, leaping gracefully about the little room like a bird. Zōyo let out a howl of anguish and burst into tears.

"Come here," he commanded. The boy came, and Zōyo fondled him tenderly. "Why, oh why did I ever make a monk of you?" he groaned.

"I told you!" said the boy. "I told you you ought to wait!"

Zōyo made him undress and led him into the next room. Goodness knows what happened after that.

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THE BOY WHO LAID THE GOLDEN STONE

A monk on Mount Hiei was a fine scholar, but having no patron he was so poor that he finally found it impossible to stay on the mountain. Instead, he moved to a temple named Urin'in in the northern part of Kyoto. He did not even have any parents to turn to for help. All he could do was go each month to Kurama, a mountain sanctuary not far away, to pray for divine aid. He made these pilgrimages faithfully for several years.

One day in the middle of the ninth moon, he went to Kurama as usual, accompanied by a single, miserable little acolyte. On his way back he reached the outskirts of the Capital just as the sun set, but the moon was so bright that he hurried on. As he came down a little street north of First Avenue, a handsome boy of about sixteen, wearing a casually belted white robe, fell in beside him. The boy looked as though he must be from some temple and the monk found it odd that he had no monk with him.

"Where are you going, Your Reverence?" asked the boy.

"Home to Urin'in," the monk replied.

"Please take me with you!"

"Well, I don't even know you and I'm afraid I really shouldn't. Where are *you* going, anyway? To your master's house? To your parents? I'd be happy to take you home with me, of course, but I hate to think what trouble I could get into for it later on!"

"I understand how you feel, Your Reverence, but you see, ten days ago my master and I quarreled, and I've been wandering in a daze ever since. I don't have any parents because they died when I was young. So I decided that if I could just find someone to love me, I'd follow him anywhere."

"Well then, I'll be glad to have you. It won't be my fault, after all, if there are repercussions. But I've no one living with me, you know, except this poor child here. I'm afraid it'll be a very dull life for you."

Despite these and similar dutiful protestations which he made as they walked along, the monk found the boy so beautiful that he loved him already, and he was determined now to go ahead. When they reached Urin'in he lit a lamp and looked the boy over more carefully. With his white skin and his prettily rounded face he was really adorable, and extraordinarily distinguished-looking. What amazing good fortune! This was no commoner's son. But the boy refused to answer any questions about his father.

The monk prepared the bed with special care, had the boy lie down, and lay down himself next to him. After chatting awhile both fell asleep. In the morning all the neighboring monks came to admire the boy, but the monk was not anxious to display him and did his best to keep him out of sight. His growing passion for the boy surprised him.

That evening the monk cuddled up to the boy and began fondling him. Then a startled look came over his face. "I've never touched any woman's body but my mother's since the day I was born," he said, "so I'm not quite sure what a woman feels like, but you're very different from the temple boys I've been with before! I don't know what it is, I just seem to melt toward you. *Are you a girl?* Tell me if you are. I've wanted you ever since I first saw you, and I just can't understand it otherwise."

"What if I *were* a girl?" said the boy, smiling. "Wouldn't you want me any more?"

"If you're a girl and I keep you, people are going to talk a lot and I don't like the thought of that one bit. And how is the Buddha going to feel? That's even worse!"

"I suppose it *is* pretty bad, as far the Buddha's concerned, if it's my being a girl that makes you so fond of me! But anyway, other people won't see you with anything but a boy. You must always

talk to me and behave with me as you would with a boy.” The young person seemed highly amused.

“So he is a girl!” thought the monk, frightened now and wishing he had never gotten himself into this. He could not send her away, she was just too dear, but he avoided sleeping too close to her and made sure there was at least some clothing between them. In the end, though, he could not help being a man, and they became a loving couple in every sense of the word. The monk was so happy that he could hardly believe it, while his neighbors could not imagine how a destitute fellow like him could ever have gotten himself so delicious a young man.

In time the “boy” began feeling unwell and stopped eating. The monk could not understand it. “I’m pregnant, you see,” she explained.

The monk’s face fell. “Oh no!” he groaned. “This is awful! For months now I’ve been presenting you to everyone as a boy. What are we going to do when you have a baby?”

“Just behave as though nothing had happened. Don’t tell anyone anything. And when the time comes, keep quiet.”

The monk spent the next months in an agony of apprehension. When the moment was finally near, the “boy” looked very sad and cried all the time. The monk cried too.

“Oh, I hurt down there!” she exclaimed. “I think the baby’s coming!”

The monk went into a paroxysm of agitated distress.

“Don’t get flustered,” said the “boy.” “Spread me a mat in a shed somewhere.”

The monk spread a mat in a storage shed and she went in to lie down. Soon she gave birth, and when it was over she put her outer robe over the child and nursed it. Next, she simply vanished. The astonished monk crept to where the baby lay and removed the robe.

It was not a baby at all but a big stone. Despite the wave of fear and revulsion that swept over him, he brought up a light for a better look. The stone gleamed gold. In fact, it was gold! The “boy” was gone and he missed her with all his heart, but he realized that the whole thing had been planned for his benefit by the Bishamon of Kurama. After that he broke off bits of the gold to sell, a little at a time, and lived as comfortably as he wished.