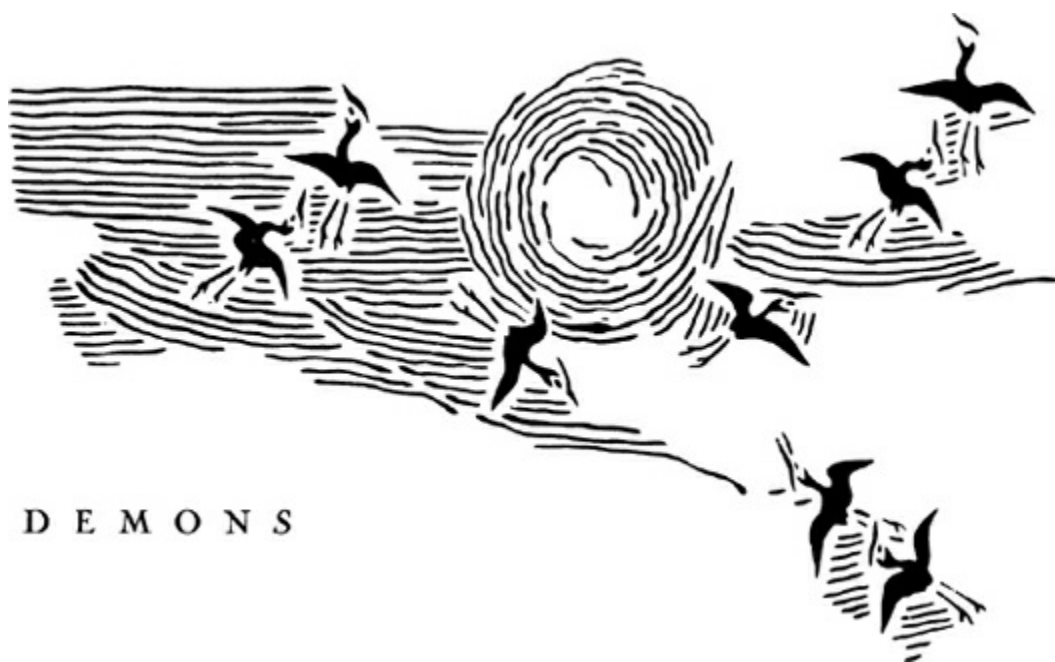




## 167. TWINLEAF

The legendary musician Hakuga no Sammi spent one brightly moonlit night wandering up and down in front of the Suzaku Gate, near the palace, playing his bamboo flute. As he did so another man appeared, dressed just like Sammi himself, and began to play too. Sammi could not imagine who the fellow was, but the tone of his flute was truly divine. Neither man said a word.

The two met and played that way every moonlit night. The sound of the other's flute was so extraordinary that Sammi, devoured by curiosity, at last suggested that they try exchanging their instruments. The other man willingly did so. Sammi found that his flute was of a quality unknown in the world.

The two saw each other often enough, but since the other never said anything about wanting his flute back, Sammi simply kept it. After Sammi's death, His Majesty took possession of the flute and had all the best players of the time try it. Not one of them could get a note out of it.

In time His Majesty had the great flutist Jōzō try the flute. Jōzō

played it as beautifully as Sammi himself. "This flute's former owner is supposed to have gotten it at the Suzaku Gate," said His Majesty, deeply impressed. "Go and play there yourself, Jōzō, and see what happens!"

The next moonlit night Jōzō went to the Suzaku Gate and began to play. "Aha, another one!" cried a pleased voice from high in the gate's upper story. Jōzō reported this to the emperor, who realized that the flute had belonged to a demon who lived in the gate.

The emperor called the flute Twinleaf because it had two leaves on it, one red and one green. Legend has it that every morning the two leaves had fresh dew on them.

Later on the flute became the property of Lord Michinaga and was eventually deposited in the Sutra Hall of the Byōdōin in Uji. Someone who saw it more recently noted that the red leaf had fallen off and that, alas, there was not a trace of dew.

## 168.

### NO NIGHT TO BE OUT COURTING

In Emperor Daigo's reign a certain Minister of the Right had a son named Tsuneyuki. The young man was both major counselor and commander of the Left Inner Guards, a very promising combination that clearly destined him for the highest posts in the imperial government. He was also handsome and amorous, and absorbed like no other in dreams of women. Every night he was off on one romantic expedition or another.

The minister's residence was in the western part of the Capital. Tsuneyuki was in love with a woman in the eastern part of the city and his constant visits to her worried his parents a great deal because the streets were unsafe after dark. Again and again they tried in vain to keep him at home.

One night he rode off as usual, accompanied by a single mounted page. As they traveled east past the Bifukumon'in Gate, one of the southern gates into the palace compound, they saw a noisy crowd approaching with torches. "Who can they be?" the young lord asked. "Where can we hide?"

"I noticed when I came this way today that the north gate to the Shinsen Garden was open," the page replied. "Let's go in, my lord, and close the gate. You can wait there till they've gone by."

Tsuneyuki hurriedly dismounted and crouched beside a gatepost.

The crowd started past. The two had kept the gate cracked open, and when they spied not people but demons they all but lost their wits with terror. Through the confusion of their own panic they heard a demon say, "Hmm. I smell a man! I'll go catch him." Something hurtled toward them and Tsuneyuki thought he was lost. Then it ran away again.

"What happened? Why didn't you get him?" another cried.

"I couldn't!" shouted Tsuneyuki's would-be assailant.

"Why not? All right, *you* go after him!" Another demon rushed the gate, only to turn and flee.

"Well? Where is he?"

"I couldn't touch him either!"

"What's the matter with you? All right, *I'll* do it!" With this boast the speaker charged. He got closer than the others, and his hands were almost on Tsuneyuki (who thought this *was* the end) when he too suddenly fled.

"What's wrong?" a chorus greeted him.

"The Sonshō Darani! He's got the Sonshō Darani on him!"

Suddenly all the torches went out. Footsteps ran off in all directions, then there was silence. The dark and quiet were even more eerily frightening than the demon's assault, and the hair rose on Tsuneyuki's head. Then he fainted.

At last, more dead than alive, he remounted his horse and set out for home. By the time he reached his room he was ill, and he collapsed with a high fever. His father sent someone to find out where Tsuneyuki had been, but learned only that the young master had been out late last night. Finally the minister came himself and found his son lying helpless in bed.

"What is it?" he asked, feeling Tsuneyuki's body. It was burning hot.

"Oh sir," cried Tsuneyuki's nurse, "I just don't know what the matter can be!" But when Tsuneyuki had told his story the nurse exclaimed, "Gracious! Last year my brother, who's an exorcist, had me write out the Sonshō Darani and sew it into the collar of the young master's robe. So it really has power, then! If it hadn't been

there, what would have become of the young master?" She pressed her hands to Tsuneyuki's forehead and burst into tears.

After several days of a fever which caused his parents anguished worry, Tsuneyuki began to mend. A glance at the calendar showed that it had been the night when demons are known to walk abroad, and when for safety's sake you should be careful to stay at home.

Obviously you should always have the Sonshō Darani on you. Why, Tsuneyuki had not even known it was there!

## 169.

### LUMP OFF, LUMP ON

An old man had a big lump on the right side of his face, as big as a big tangerine. It made him so ugly that he avoided other people and instead worked alone in the mountains cutting wood. Once he got caught in an awful storm and had to stay in the mountains overnight.

No one else was around. He hid, wide awake and terrified, in a hollow tree. Feeling as lonely as he did, he breathed a sigh of relief when he heard other people coming. Then he peeked outside. The crowd, a hundred strong, was a horrible sight. Some in it were red dressed in green, some were black with a red loincloth, some had one eye or no mouth, and most were just indescribable. They built a fire as bright as the sun and made a circle round it, right in front of the old man's tree. He was frightened nearly out of his wits.

One monster, apparently the chief, sat down by the fire in the place of honor, and the rest sat in twin rows to his right and left. Next, they all began drinking and carrying on the way people do. As the wine jar went round and round, the chief got awfully drunk. When a young monster with a tray made his way slowly up to the chief, mumbling something or other, the chief burst out laughing and waved his cup. They really were just like people! The young monster danced, and when he had finished another began. Each one took his turn, right on up to the senior monsters, and if some danced badly others danced well. The old man could hardly believe his eyes.