



H A U N T S I I



190.

NO NONSENSE!

The splendid mansion of Tōru, the Minister of the Left, was called Kawara-no-in, or Riverside. Tōru was especially proud of its elaborate garden. When he died, his heirs offered the place to Retired Emperor Uda.

Late one night Uda heard someone open a storeroom in the west wing and come rustling toward him. Peering into the darkness he saw, kneeling now some six feet away, a gentleman in elegant everyday dress, carrying a courtier's baton and wearing a sword in the manner of a very great lord.

"Who are you?" Uda asked.

"The master of this house."

"You mean you're the Minister Tōru?"

"Yes, I am."

"What do you want?"

"Well, the house is mine, and if I may say so, your living here too makes the place a bit small for me. I wonder what you suggest."

"This is very odd," said Uda, his voice rising with anger. "When

did I ever rob a man of his house? I live here because your heirs gave the place to *me*. Your being a ghost doesn't mean you talk sense. What's all this about?"

The ghost vanished instantly and was never seen again.

People were very impressed with His Majesty's handling of the incident. "No ordinary man," they said, "could possibly have argued so forcefully with a ghost!"

191.

QUITE A BIT OF NONSENSE

Once, Retired Emperor Uda took a carriage ride with one of his consorts to his Riverside Palace. The view from there was lovely, and that night the moon was very bright. Uda had the mats from his carriage spread out in one of the rooms, then he and the consort lay down. They were making love when a storeroom door opened and a voice spoke. "Who's there?" Uda called.

"Tōru," said the voice. "I want your consort for *me*."

"You were just a minister when you were alive," Uda retorted. "I'm an emperor. How dare you? Go away!"

The ghost clutched at Uda, who was half dead with fright. His servants were all too far away to hear him cry out. Only the little oxherd was nearby, tending the ox from the carriage while it grazed. Uda had him get the carriage brought round and helped his consort into it. She was ghastly pale and could not even stand.

As soon as Uda got home, he sent an exorcist to take care of the ghost. He was very lucky that the gods were still watching over him even though he had abdicated. There were sword cuts on the storeroom door, made by the gods as they slashed at Tōru's ghost and forced him back inside.



192.

ONE MOUTHFUL

Long ago, Retired Emperor Yōzei lived in a haunted palace in northern Kyoto.

One night a guard was asleep in the Fishing Pavilion, a pavilion for parties and moon-viewing built out over the large garden pond. Suddenly he awoke to feel skinny fingers playing lightly over his face. Frightened by the eerie sensation, he drew his sword and seized the intruder. He had captured a miserable old man dressed all in pale blue.

"This is where *I* lived a long time ago," the old man said dolefully. "I'm Urashima's younger brother, you know, and I've been here for twelve hundred years. Please let me go! If only you'll build me a shrine and do me proper honor, I'll willingly protect the place!"

"But it isn't just up to *me*," the guard replied. "I'll have to consult His Majesty about it."

"Oh you will, will you?" snarled the old man. He kicked the guard high in the air three times. The last time the guard came down, as limp as a rag, he opened his mouth and swallowed him. At first he had looked quite ordinary, but then he grew so huge that he made just one mouthful of that guard.

193.

SUDDENLY, HORSE DUNG