

than ever, he flew on over province after province until he reached the mouth of the Yodo River, the river that flows from near the Capital into the Inland Sea. Up the river he flew, and the murmur grew louder still. The Yodo narrowed to the Uji River, and the tengu soared on up to where the Uji empties out of Lake Biwa. Here the rumor of the waters was distinctly loud. He pressed on over the lake to where a brook came tumbling down from Yokawa on Mount Hiei. Here the voice of the waters chanting the sacred verse rose to a roar, and he saw upstream the Four Heavenly Kings and countless other glorious Guardians of the Teaching watching over the brook. Awed and amazed, he dared not go further, but he could not resist hiding awhile to see whether he could find out what this place was.

When a lesser celestial spirit happened past, the tengu plucked up enough courage to ask, "Why is the water chanting this deepest expression of the noble Teaching?"

"There are a lot of learned monks up on the mountain," the spirit replied, "and this brook runs through their privy. That's why its waters proclaim the noble truth, and why we spirits guard it."

The tengu forgot all thought of mischief. "If even the stream that flushes their privy proclaims the deepest truth," he reflected, "then the monks of this mountain must be more holy than I could ever imagine! I'll become a monk on Mount Hiei!" And as he made this vow he passed away.

Next he lodged in the womb of a very great lady, the wife of Prince Ariake who was a son of Emperor Uda, and he was born as the prince's son. In time he did become a monk on Mount Hiei and acquired a great reputation for learning and sanctity.

34.

JAPAN MEANS TROUBLE!

A powerful Chinese tengu named Chirayōju once came to Japan and met one of our local tengu. "In *my* country," he boasted, "there are lots of rough, tough warrior-monks, but now that I've got them all eating out of my hand I thought I'd come and have a look

around Japan. They say there are some pretty potent ascetics here. Perhaps I might see what I can do with them. What do you think?"

The Japanese tengu thoroughly approved. "I've got all the good, brave monks of *this* country eating out of *my* hand," he answered, "but if you want to give them a bad time, go ahead. One's just asking for it, in fact. I'll show you. Come on."

Off he went with the Chinese tengu in tow. They flew up to the stone tower on the main peak of Mount Hiei and stood together beside the trail.

"People here know me," said the Japanese tengu. "I'd better not show myself. I'll just hide down the hill a little. Turn yourself into an old monk and wait. Make sure you take care of anyone who comes by!"

The Japanese tengu hid in a thicket and from there kept an eye on his Chinese colleague, who turned into a perfect, bent old monk. The weird gleam in his eye showed he was planning something good, and the Japanese tengu looked forward with pleasure to what would come next.

Along came a palanquin from higher up the mountain. Inside it rode Yokyō, a monk of rank and reputation who was on his way down to the Capital. When he reached the tower, the Japanese tengu glanced over to check on the old monk. He was gone. Yokyō and a crowd of disciples passed by in peace.

Thoroughly puzzled, the Japanese tengu went looking for his Chinese colleague and found him cowering down in the ravine with his behind in the air.

"Why are you hiding?" asked the Japanese tengu.

"Who was that monk who went by?"

"That was Yokyō, a famous wonder-worker. He's on his way down to the palace for a special rite. He's so holy I thought you'd show him up a bit, but you just let him go. Too bad."

"Right, right, I could see he was very holy and I knew he must be the one you were talking about. Well, that was fine, and I was just going to have at him when he disappeared. Instead there was a column of flame rising from his palanquin. I could see I'd get burned if I got too close, so I thought, well, I'll just pass on this one. Then I sort of got myself out of sight."

The Japanese tengu laughed mockingly. "Here you fly in all the way from China," he said, "and you can't even roll a fellow like

that over a few times? You just let him by? I'd say you're pathetic. Next time, stop your man and *do* something to him!"

"Absolutely!" said the Chinese tengu. "Just you watch!" He set himself to wait as before by the stone tower while the Japanese tengu crouched in a thicket.

A noisy band came down the path. It was the great prelate Jinzen heading off to town with acolytes running ahead of his palanquin to clear the way. When the acolytes got to the old tengu monk, they just herded him on ahead with merry whacks of their sticks. The old monk put his arms up to protect his head and cleared out. He obviously was going to get nowhere near the palanquin. Those acolytes had gotten rid of him in no time.

The Japanese tengu went after him and heaped ridicule on him again. The Chinese tengu protested. "With all due respect," he complained, "you don't know what you're saying! I wasn't going to get close to those acolytes, not the way *they* looked, and I thought I'd better get out before they caught me and cracked my skull. So yes, I let that monk by. I can fly here from China in a flash, but those acolytes were too fast for *me*. No sir, I hid instead!"

"Well, for pity's sake do something to the *next* one at least! You can't come all the way here and do nothing! Why, you'll be an embarrassment to your country!" Having tried again to shame his colleague into action, the Japanese tengu went off to hide.

Soon a babble of voices rose toward them from a party on its way up. A monk with a red stole appeared first, clearing the path, and behind him young monks bore a ceremonial chest containing the illustrious traveler's monastic robes. The palanquin behind them carried Jie of Yokawa, the abbot of the entire temple complex on the mountain. "Will they get him?" wondered the Japanese tengu, as two dozen boy acolytes passed by on either side of the palanquin. But the old monk was gone. He had hidden again.

"I noticed a suspicious character around here," said one of the boys. "Let's spread out and look!" The fierce boys dispersed on either side of the path, brandishing sticks, and the Japanese tengu prudently stole further down the slope into a deeper thicket.

"Here he is! Get him!" shouted a boy's voice.

"What?" yelled an answering chorus.

"There's this old monk hiding here! He doesn't look right!"

"Hold him! Don't let him get away!" The others dashed off to

provide reinforcements.

“How awful!” the Japanese tengu groaned, but he was far too frightened to do anything but burrow deeper into his thicket and flatten himself to the ground. Peering fearfully out, he saw a dozen boys drag the old monk to the stone tower, beat and kick him, and give him a very bad time indeed. The old monk bellowed and roared, but it did him little good.

“Who are you, you old monk?” the boys shouted, whacking him as they spoke. “Tell us! Tell us!”

“I’m just a poor tengu from China, young masters! I thought I’d have a look at the monks passing by. But the first was Yokyō, and he was reciting the Mantra of Fire so there was a huge flame in his palanquin; the next was Jinzen, who was doing the Mantra of Fudō so that Fudō’s own minions were guarding him with their iron staffs; and the third, the abbot, was pondering Perfect Meditation. The first two frightened me so I hid, but the abbot didn’t seem frightening at all and I was careless. That’s how I got caught!”

The boys could not see that he was much of a threat, so they decided just to let him go, but not before each had filed past and given him a swift kick in the behind.

Once the abbot was by, the Japanese tengu crawled up from the bottom of the ravine and went to find the old monk where he lay all battered and bruised. “How’d it go *this* time?” he asked. “Did you get him?”

“Shut up. Just lay off me,” the Chinese tengu growled. “I came here all the way from China, innocently believing I’d get a little cooperation from the likes of you, but you wouldn’t give me any straight help, no, you had to put me up against men like living Buddhas, and all I’ve got for my trouble is a bruised backside and a good beating!” And he burst into tears.

“I don’t blame you,” the Japanese tengu replied consolingly, “but you see, you’re a tengu from a great big country, and I thought you’d be able to take care of anyone from a small country like mine. I’m sorry you got your behind kicked!” He took the Chinese tengu to a nice place in the mountains where the poor fellow could soak the sore part in a hot bath and make it feel better, and then he packed the visitor back off to China.



While the two were bathing, a couple of servants from the city came into the mountains to fetch firewood. Passing the bath shed, they noticed smoke rising from the chimney, and decided that as long as someone was already heating water they might as well go in and have a soak themselves. They put down their loads and went in to find two old monks in the big tub. One of them seemed to have some sort of pain in his butt. The monks wanted to know who the two men were, but the men, for their part, noticed that the bath shed stank to high heaven — so horribly, in fact, that they both instantly got a splitting headache. Terrified, they escaped as fast as they could.

Later on the Japanese tengu possessed someone and told the whole story.

35.

THE INVINCIBLE PAIR

In Sanuki province there still is a large body of water named Mano Pond that Kōbō Daishi made out of kindness toward the people who live nearby. It is so big, and the dikes around it are so high, that it looks more like a lake than a pond. Its deep waters harbor countless fish great and small, and at the bottom there once lived a dragon.

One day this dragon came out of the water to sun himself, and slithered around on an isolated section of the dike in the shape of a little snake. Just then the tengu of Mount Hira, far off in Ōmi province, flew over in the form of a kite. He dove at the little snake, caught him in his talons, and soared up again into the sky.

A dragon is, of course, immensely strong, but this one had been taken so suddenly that all he could do was hang in the tengu's