

“we’ve all had lots of yam soup!”

Just then Toshihito spotted a fox peering at them round a corner. “Look!” he exclaimed. “There’s my messenger! Feed him!” So they fed the fox yam soup too, and he ate up all he got.

All in all, Toshihito carried through his prank in a wonderfully open-hearted way. A month or so later Sir Goi left again for the Capital, burdened this time with robes for both daily and formal wear, with leather chests full of bolts of cotton and silk, and, needless to say, with the beautiful bedclothes he had slept in the first night. All this was already loaded onto his saddled horse when Toshihito saw him off.

Toshihito did not have much rank, but it just shows how well a man can do anyway when he is well established and liked in his own locality.

84.

THE EVICTION

The Minister Miyoshi no Kiyoyuki, a man of extraordinary intelligence and learning, was expert even in yin-yang lore. Having no house of his own, he located a ruinous old mansion that stood near the crossing of Fifth and Horikawa avenues in Kyoto and bought the place, even though no one would live in it because it was well known to be haunted. Then, over his relatives’ strenuous objections, he prepared to move in on an astrologically suitable day.

The right day turned out to be the twentieth of the sixth moon. Kiyoyuki began his move in an unusual way by setting out in his carriage about six in the evening, taking only a straw mat with him.

The house was so old that you couldn’t even guess its age, while its garden was full of pines, maples, and cherry trees so ancient that they certainly must have had tree spirits living in them. Vines, now just beginning to redden with fall, clambered everywhere, and the moss that covered the ground had not been swept for years. Kiyoyuki had the shutters raised. The interior partitions were all

warped and torn. He had a corner of the floor cleaned up and spread out the mat he had brought. Then he had a lamp lit and lay down on the mat facing south. When his carriage had been put away in the carriage house, he dismissed all his servants and ox-drivers with instructions to come back the next day.

Kiyoyuki dozed off, still facing south. In the middle of the night he was awakened by a sort of rustling in the latticework ceiling and saw a face sticking out from each crossing of the lattice. All the faces were different. When he calmly went on looking, they disappeared. Next, forty or fifty riders, each a foot tall, clattered across the floor from west to east. Kiyoyuki kept watching.

A closet door opened and out came a very distinguished though tiny lady all in dark brown, with her hair down over her shoulders. The delicious scent of musk filled the air as she knelt before him. A red fan hid most of her face, but the forehead that peeped above it was white and the eyes elegantly long. The way just the pupils moved as she glanced to either side was both dignified and sinister. Watching her, he assumed that the rest of her face must be very pretty, but as she prepared to go she moved the fan aside a moment. Lo and behold, her nose was bright red, and crossed pairs of long silver fangs protruded from the corners of her mouth! This did give him a bit of a shock, but she meanwhile had vanished into the closet and closed the door.

It was nearly dawn now, but there was a bright moon. Kiyoyuki was lying there as alert and untroubled as ever when an old man in a light-blue robe came in from the dim garden outside, knelt, bowed very low, and respectfully held a letter forth.

“What have you got to say to me?” asked Kiyoyuki sharply.

The old man answered in a little voice, “I’m here to let you know, sir, that we consider it very wrong of you to claim possession of a house which has been ours for many years, and that we wish to register a vigorous protest.”

“You don’t know what you’re talking about. People often buy houses from one another. It’s perfectly normal. But *you* insist on disrupting this process by frightening away anyone who wants to live here and by occupying the place yourselves. You should be ashamed. Real demons know right from wrong and are perfectly straight about it. That’s what makes them frightening. But all you do is invite the punishment of heaven. Why, you’re only a tribe of

old foxes! Give me a single hawk or dog and I'd have him eat you all. Go tell that to your friends!"

"You're perfectly right, sir, perfectly right. But we've lived here so long, you see. We wanted you to know how we feel. I'm not in the habit of frightening people. The culprits, I'm afraid, are a couple of youngsters. I *try* to control them, sir, but they're always up to their tricks. If you're going to move in here, though, sir, I really don't know what we're to do. We've nowhere to go. Or at least, the only place is a vacant lot by the main gate of the Academy. May we have your permission to move there, sir?"

"That sounds like a very good idea," Kiyoyuki answered. "You might as well get started."

The old man shouted an order and forty or fifty voices shouted assent.

After daybreak Kiyoyuki's household came to fetch him home again. He then went about the business of having the house remodeled and made more up-to-date. Nothing special happened while he lived there.