

people for hundreds of yards around had to evacuate their houses. The stench was just too much.

Of course, the governor told the whole story when he got back to the Capital.



92.

SEA DEVILS

Eight days into the seventh moon of 1171 a ship put in to Oki Island in the province of Izu. The islanders assumed that it had been blown in by a storm and went to have a look.

The ship rode seventy or eighty yards offshore. As the islanders watched, the devils on board let down ropes and moored it on all four sides to rocks on the sea bottom. Then eight devils jumped into the sea and shortly emerged on land. The islanders offered them food and millet wine. Though they never said a word, the devils ate and drank like horses.

The devils were eight or nine feet tall, with wild and tangled hair. Their bodies were blackish and hairless, and their eyes as round as monkeys' eyes. Apart from some seaweed they had wrapped around their waists they were naked, but all sorts of pictures were drawn on their skin, with a sort of outline frame around each. Each devil carried a good long staff.

A devil asked to see one of the islanders' bow and arrows. When the islander hesitated, the devil killed him with one blow of his staff. The devils then struck eight others, of whom four died while four, though wounded, survived. Next, the devils belched fire from their sides. Thinking they were all going to be killed, the islanders took out the bows and arrows belonging to the god of their shrine and prepared to defend themselves. At this point the devils went

back into the sea and swam underwater out to their ship. Then they sailed away against the wind.

On the fourteenth day of the tenth moon, a report on the incident was forwarded to the provincial government, together with a sash that one of the devils had dropped. They say the sash is now in the treasury of Sanjūsangendō, the famous temple in Kyoto.

93.

THE DANCING MUSHROOM

Four or five woodcutters from the Capital once went into the mountains north of the city and, as fortune would have it, got lost. They were puzzling over which way to go when they heard people coming down the hillside. Who could they be? Four or five nuns, singing and dancing their way along, as jolly as you please. The woodcutters took fright. Real nuns would never behave this way! They couldn't be human! No, they must be tengu, or demons of some sort!

The nuns made straight for the woodcutters who, despite their alarm, managed to ask the estimable ladies why they were carrying on that way, and why on top of everything else they were coming down from high on the mountain.

"Oh dear, all our dancing and singing must have rather frightened you!" the nuns replied. "You see, we're nuns from such-and-such a convent. We all went into the mountains to pick flowers for the altar and then got completely lost. When we noticed some mushrooms, we realized we were hungry. Of course we realized the mushrooms might be poisonous, but we decided we might as well go ahead and eat them as starve. They tasted good. Then we began dancing. We didn't *mean* to dance, you see, we just found ourselves doing it. We were quite surprised!"

The startled woodcutters now noticed how hungry they were. The nuns had kept their leftover mushrooms. "Why, rather than starve," thought the men, "we might as well beg some off the nuns and eat too!" So they did.

As soon as they had eaten the mushrooms they found themselves