



## THE LAUGHING DUMPLING

There was once an old woman who laughed at everything. She was a very old woman, but she seemed young. That was because she laughed so much, for the god of laughter made all the lines in her face pleasant lines.

She laughed at rain, she laughed at drought, she laughed at poverty. She had never had a chance to laugh at wealth, for she was very, very poor. She made rice dumplings to sell, and so she was called by the people about her the "Laughing Dumpling." Her name was really Sanja. Sanja had but one wish. She never prayed to Juro-Jin' for good fortune, or to any of the gods for wealth; but she wished above all things to make the finest rice dumplings in all the city. She tried and tried, and each time she made them better than the last; but she never made them quite perfect, and so she was never quite satisfied. She never had quite all the rice she wanted to work with; for she was so poor that each grain seemed to her as dear as a piece

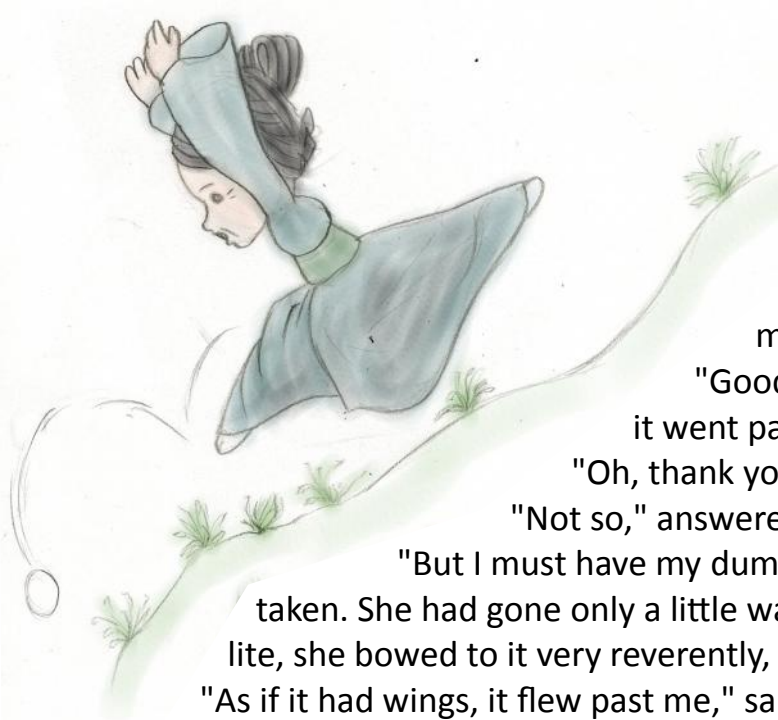
of money to a miser.

But still she tried and still she laughed. One day she sat in her kitchen making her dumplings with her usual care. Her little house stood at the top of a hill, quite outside of the city, and as she worked and patted with her paddle, one of the finest of her dumplings, it slipped and rolled right out of the door and down the hill.

"Dear, dear!" she cried, "that will never, never do! I can't afford to lose that dumpling. Perhaps I can catch it."

So she sprang up and ran after it as fast as her feet would carry her. But the dumpling had a good start, and she could not catch it. She saw it ahead of her, and suddenly it bounced down a hole in the ground. She ran after it, and before she knew it, her geta 1 slipped into the hole and she dropped through.





"A-a-a-i!" she cried, "where am I going?"

She did not stop falling until her breath was almost gone. Then suddenly she found herself in a place she had never seen before. The trees and flowers looked strange, and she felt a little frightened and very much alone. But as she looked about her her heart grew lighter, for she saw a statue of Jizu and him she well knew. So she bowed to him, and said, "Good morning, my Lord Jizu. Have you seen a rice dumpling fall this way?"

"Good morning," answered Jizu, with his very sweet smile. "Yes, I saw a dumpling and it went past here, down the hill, skipping as if it had legs."

"Oh, thank you very much, then I must skip after it," said Sanja.

"Not so," answered Jizu, "do not go down there. An Oni s lives there, and he may do you harm."

"But I must have my dumpling," laughed the old woman; and she ran on in the direction the dumpling had taken. She had gone only a little way when she came to another statue of Jizu. Being a good woman as well as polite, she bowed to it very reverently, and said, "My good Lord Jizu, have you seen a dumpling pass this way?"

"As if it had wings, it flew past me," said Jizu, smiling upon her most sweetly.

"Then I must hurry to catch it," said the old woman.

But Jizu shook his head, "You must not think of that," he said, "there is an Oni below there who is most wicked. He does not like old women at all, and he will surely be cruel to you if he does not eat you."

"But I must have my dumpling," said Sanja. "He'll not eat me. I'm too tough. Tee-hee-hee!" and she ran laughing on her way.

As she went along she thought she smelled her dumpling, and, as she was very hungry, it smelled very good.

"If I ever catch that dumpling I will certainly eat every bit of it," she said to herself. "I will punish it for giving me such a chase. Tee-hee-hee!" Then she felt a shadow across her face. She looked up and saw another statue of Jizu.

"Most gracious Lord Jizu," she said, smiling up into his ever smiling face, "have you seen my dumpling pass this way?"

"Yes, it passed but a moment ago," he answered, "but do not think of searching for it, for the Oni who lives beyond is very fierce

and cruel, and he will certainly eat you. He is fond of dumplings, but he is much fonder of human meat."

"One who is as old as I am hasn't any very fresh meat on her bones, tee-hee-hee!" laughed Sanja. But as she spoke, she heard a terrible noise and her face turned pale.

"Get behind me quickly," said Jizu, "here comes the Oni. Perhaps you may escape him if you hide behind me."

O Sanja San crept quickly behind him. She found herself not so brave as she had thought, and she did not feel at all like laughing. She hid herself very carefully behind Jizu, and up came the Oni, very wild and fierce.

"Good morning, Lord Jizu," he said, "I smell meat!"

Even for the Oni, Jizu's smile was the same, and he made answer, "Good morning, Oni. Is it not dumpling that you smell? I saw one pass this way not long ago."

"No, indeed," said the Oni, "it is not dumpling. I know one passed this way, for I saw it. What I smell now is human meat!" and he sniffed and sniffed until Sanja shivered. But for all her fear, she wanted very much to laugh.

"I don't smell it," said Jizu, still smiling. "Are you sure it is not rice dumpling? It seems to me that I smell a little of it about you."

"That is not strange," said the Oni with a grin; "for when I saw that juicy dumpling rolling my way I caught it and ate it. It was good. I wish I had the person who made it!"

O Sanja San was as angry as she could be at the thought of his eating her dumpling. She was frightened, too, and she cowered closer in the shadow of the Lord Jizu.

"What I smell now is meat, fresh human meat, juicy, young and tender!" and the Oni sniffed again and

spoke,



smacked his lips very impolitely.

This was too much for Sanja. She could not help thinking of her wrinkled, withered flesh, and how far from juicy, young and tender it was. She laughed out loud, "Tee-hee-hee. Tee-hee-hee!"

The Oni's ears were as good as his nose, and without a word he stretched out a long, hairy arm behind Jizu, and pulled her forth from her hiding place. She was frightened terribly, but still she laughed.

"Who are you?" demanded the Oni.

"I am the woman who made the dumpling," she answered. "Why did you eat it?"

"Because it was good," said the Oni.

"You couldn't eat me for that reason," said Sanja.

"I don't intend to eat you," said the Oni. "You will come home with me and cook. You needn't be afraid. As long as you cook good dumplings for me nothing will harm you."

"Very well," said Sanja politely, for there was really nothing else to say.

The Oni put her in a boat and rowed away across a river to his castle. There she cooked for him such dishes as he had never before tasted, and they were good.

But when she came to make rice dumplings, the Oni said to her, "You are a good cook, but you are wasteful. When you cook rice put but one grain into the pot."

"One grain!" she cried. "Tee-hee-hee! how could any one live on one grain of rice?"

"I will show you," said the Oni. "For though you are a woman and think you know much, there are some things which I know better than you."

Sanja was silent; but she tossed her head a little, and said to herself,





"How impolite he is! And how vain to think he could possibly know more than I do!"

"Be sure you have your water boiling," said the Oni. "Put one grain of rice in the pot, then take this paddle in your hand and if you want rice for ten persons stir ten times, in this way;" and he stirred the paddle about in the water. "See!" and lo! the grain of rice burst into ten pieces, and each piece into ten more, and each a perfect grain, until the pot was filled.

Sanja fairly gasped with astonishment.

"This is a magic paddle," said the Oni; "and with it you can cook every thing, serve every one, and always have enough."

So Sanja stayed with the Oni and cooked for him, and she gave perfect satisfaction. The dumplings she made were always perfect, and the rice pot was never empty, because of the magic paddle.

All went very well until one day Sanja grew homesick. She felt as if she could not stay with the Oni another day, and as if she would die if she could not go home. She thought arid thought about it; and the little hut with its paper walls, and the cherry tree beside it seemed fairer than all the fine castles of Oni Land. So, one day when the Oni had gone off for a day's hunting, she decided to try to escape. She stole out of the castle and down to the river's bank; and there she found the boat in which the Oni had brought her. Quickly she got into it and began to row. She had reached the middle of the river, when she heard a loud cry from the shore. There was the Oni with all his friends, waving their hands wildly and calling loudly to her, "Come back, Laughing Dumpling, come back!"

She was afraid to go on and still more afraid to go back. She began to row harder than ever when she saw what the Oni was doing. He and all his friends stooped down and, making cups of their hands, they began to drink the water of the river. They drank and drank, and soon there was so little water left to float the boat that they could wade to her across the river bed. She was so frightened that she could hardly think. As they came nearer, however, she thought how funny they looked, wading out from the reedy shore, and she laughed, "Tee-hee-hee!"

The Oni stopped and looked at her, "How strange that she laughs at everything!" said



one.

She laughed again, "Tee-hee-hee!"

"She shall not laugh at me!" cried her master; and he started fiercely toward her.

The Laughing Dumpling was not going to be caught if she could help it, for she felt that this was now no laughing matter. Wondering what she could do to get away, she thought of the magic paddle which was tucked in her belt, where she had always carried it. She drew it forth, and reaching over the side of the boat she quickly stirred the 'waters'. - Then, lo! they began to flow again. They flowed so fast that they washed the boat right into the shore. They filled the river so quickly that the Oni had to swim for their lives.

Sanja ran quickly away, as fast as she could go, past the three statues of Jizu, up the hill and, with difficulty, up through the very hole into which she had fallen. When she reached home she sat down quite exhausted; but as soon as she could get her breath she laughed until she cried.

"I ought not to have taken away the Oni's paddle," she said; "but he ate my dumpling, and made me cook all these months without any pay. Now I shall be able to make fine dumplings for all Kyoto. Teehee-hee!"

And so she did. For the magic paddle kept her always supplied with rice, and everybody came to eat of the wonderful rice cakes and to see the Laughing Dumpling.



# Crane Feathers

Long ago in a poor mountain village there lived an old man and an old woman who were sad for they had no children. One snowy winters day the old man went into the forest to gather some firewood. He piled the wood onto his back and began to descend the mountain back to the village when suddenly he heard a cry of pain.

When he followed the cries to see if someone needed help he found a crane which had gotten caught in a snare and was beating its wings and moaning in pain.

“Oh you poor thing, be patient and I’ll help you,” he told the bird as he cut away its snare allowing it to fly happily away.

That evening when he sat with his wife to eat dinner someone knocked softly on the door.

“Who could that be at this hour,” they wondered.

The old man opened the door and saw a girl standing outside covered in snow.

“I got lost in the mountains,” she told him. “Its snowing so hard that the roads aren’t visible.”

“Come in and share dinner with us,” the old woman invited.

The old man then took the girl by the hand and led her to the center of the room where he set her down to eat supper with them. The girl was beautiful and kind and



helped the old woman around the house.

“If you want, grandmother, I will massage your shoulders and rub your back,” the girl told the old woman.

“Thank you darling, my back does really hurt,” the old woman replied. “What is your name?”

“O-Tsuru,” the girl told her.

“O-Tsuru, it’s a good name,” the old man praised her.

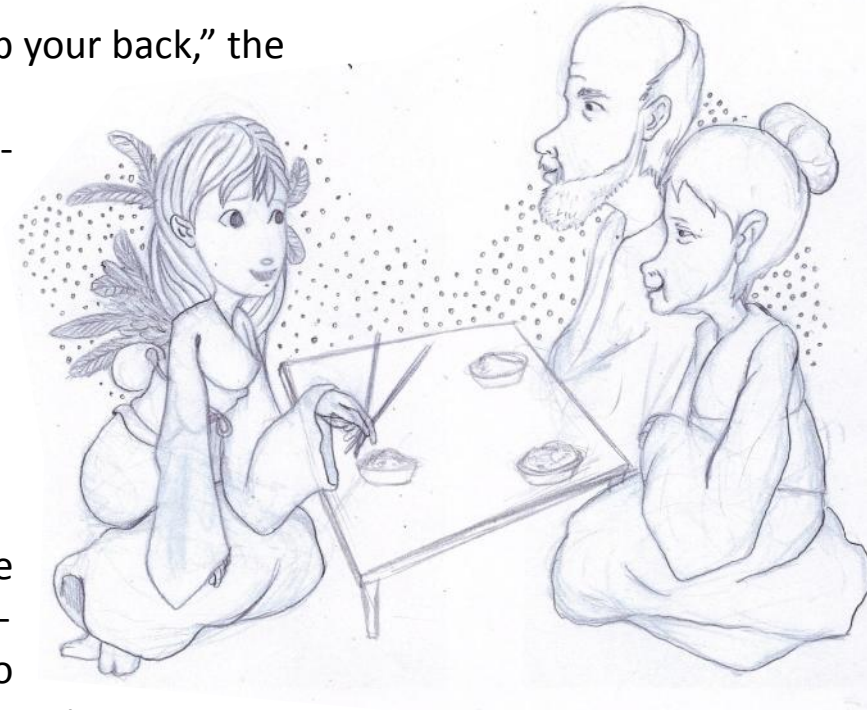
The next morning when the girl was getting ready to travel again the old man told her that they didn’t have any children, he then asked her to stay with them as their daughter.

“I would be pleased to stay, for I have no one on earth,” the girl thanked him for his kindness. All she asked for was a room where she could weave in privet, for she told the old man and old woman not to watch her as she worked as she didn’t like for people to see what she did while working. So they gave the girl her own room to weave in.

She then disappeared into that room for three days. When she emerged she gave them a beautiful tapestry she’d made with the image a red field and flying golden cranes.

“What beautiful weaving,” the old woman admired.

“I can’t take my eyes off it, the old man agreed as he felt the fabric which was softer than down.” The old man then looked at the girl with concern. “It seems like your getting thin, and you look so tired. I don’t think you





should work so hard.”

Suddenly they heard a hoarse voice calling in to them from a merchant who went from village to village buying art from peasants.

“Do you have some art for sale, some weaving that you’ve done during the winter perhaps?” he asked.

“Look at the work our daughter did,” the woman said proudly as she showed him the scarlet cloth with the golden cranes.

“Oh, such a beautiful pattern!” the man exclaimed. “No one in the capital will have seen something so magnificent,” the man gushed. Your daughter is amazing.”

The man then pulled out a handful of gold coins, and said that he could sell the wonderful fabric to the prince’s palace.

The old people couldn’t believe their eyes at the site of the real gold coins, for this was the first time they’d seen real gold.

“Thank you, daughter, thank you!” they thanked the girl. “Now we’ll be able to live a better life and will be able to get you a new dress so everyone can see what beauty you have.”

Spring came, along with the warm sun. And the village children came to the house and called for the girl to play with them. Or they would gather around her and she would tell them tales of the various strange birds. Then after some time the merchant came again and asked the old



man if it would be possible to buy the same cloth as before.

“Don’t ask me that,” the old man told him. “My daughter can’t weave any longer. Doing so is taxing on her health.”

But the merchant shoved a purse full of gold coins into the old man’s hand.

“I’ll pay even more than I did last time,” the merchant offered. “And if you refuse it’ll go bad with you for the prince has sent me to get more cloth so if you don’t have it in three days it’ll be your heads,” the merchant threatened.

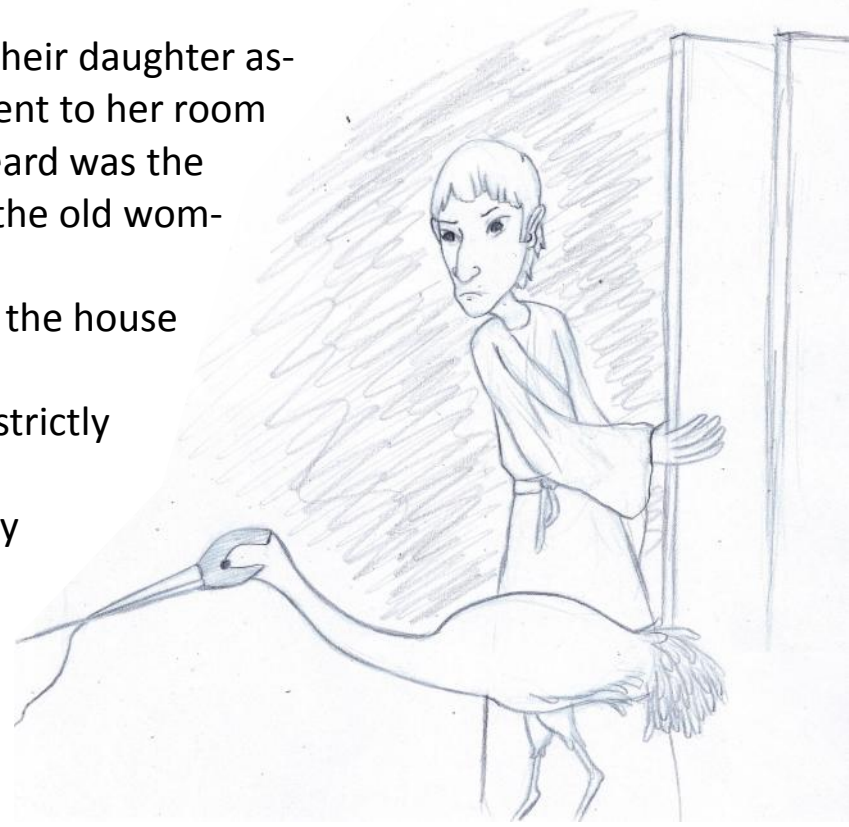
So the old man and the old woman began to lament their fate but their daughter assured them that she could have the cloth ready in time. So Tsuru went to her room to weave and shut the door tightly behind her. As before all they heard was the beat, beat of the loom as the girl worked quickly. The old man and the old woman were worried about her and how much work she was doing.

“Well are you finished?” the gruff voice of the merchant called into the house after three days time.

“We cannot show you,” they told the merchant. “For our daughter strictly forbade that we enter the room while she was working.”

“That’s nonsense,” the merchant told them as he pushed the elderly people aside and opened the door.

Inside the girl’s room at her loom was a large crane. It opened its wide wings and plucked the most delicate and soft feathers from itself to weave the beautiful fabric. The old man and woman shut



the door quickly as the merchant ran away with fear.

The next morning the children all came running and calling for the girl to come out and play with them or tell them a story. But she was still in her room. The old man and old woman were afraid to look in on her, but at last they did so to find a tapestry lying on the floor with crane feathers lying all around. They searched for their daughter.

That evening the children called to them, “grandma, grandpa come quick.”

So they hurried out to where the children were and saw a crane circling about the houses, though it was struggling to fly. That’s when the old man understood that this was the same crane he’d rescued.

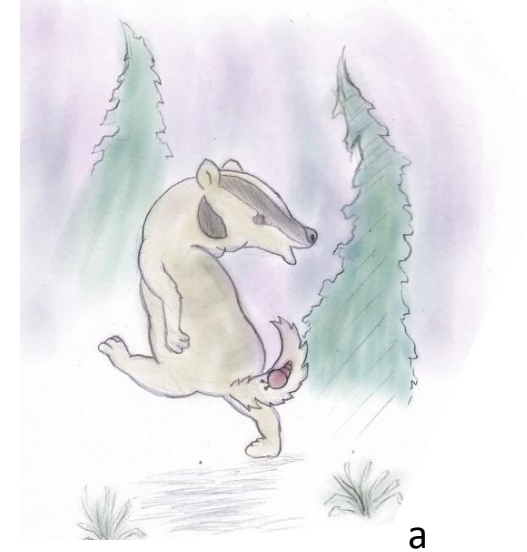
“Come back, come back to us,” they called to the crane. But it was in vain, for soon the crane disappeared into the sunset. The old man and old woman waited a long time for their daughter to return but she never did. And it is said that on remote islands on the large lakes you can see the crane walking on the beach glancing back to where the old woman and old man remain.

# The Badger and the Snail



Long ago a badger called on a snail to ask the small animal to go worship with him at the temples in Ise For several days they journeyed to the temple and as they traveled they talked. “Mr. Badger aren’t you bored of simply walking, perhaps we should race,” the snail suggested. Curious as always to see who was faster the badger agreed and he began to run. But the snail settled down on the tip of the badgers tail where she hitched ride in secret.. The badger ran and ran as fast as he could and as soon as he cross the threshold of the temple he jumped and waved his tail for joy as he was certain he’d won.

But unknown to him he threw the snail from his tail deep into the temple where it cracked against the wall so hard its shell split in two. But though she was in pain the snail managed to say: “Hey Mr. Badger your late!” I’ve been here such a long time.” For there was no way the clever snail was going to admit she’d lost.





## The Yokai



Once a long time ago there was an village with an old temple which was haunted by a yokai. People were afraid to approach the temple for they could hear its steps creaking and the harsh laugh of the creature inside. The villagers gathered in the house of the elders and began to think of how they might tame the yokai but they couldn't think of what to do or who to send. As they pondered a medicine merchant named Tasuke came to the village. Being young and reckless he wasn't afraid of anything. But the question was could anyone cope with the yokai.

Tasuke shrugged when the question was put before him and agreed casually to help.

So it was decided that he would go to the temple that night. Now autumn nights are especially quite so there wasn't a sound as he entered the temple. Tasuke sat down inside the old building but it was-

n't long before he grew bored and started to yawn loudly. The sound of his yawn was so loud that it echoed and echoed down the street for a while.

Finally when everything was quite once more Tasuke saw the yokai standing before him with a large grin.

"Who are you? A Daredevil or have you actually come to see me?" the yokai asked



the young man.

Still sleepy Tasuke yawned once more at the dumb struck werewolf.

“So you’re not afraid,” the yokai asked with surprise.

“What’s fear,” Tasuke responded.

“All the people in the world are afraid of something,” the yokai chuckled darkly. “And now I’m going to be what you fear.”

“Get way from me,” Tasuke growled angrily at the yokai.

“Come now, I’m an expert in fear and you must be afraid of something,” the yokai snarled and I’m a yokai so you should be afraid of me,” the yokai laughed proudly.

“Well, the one thing that does give me Goosebumps is gold,” Tasuke told the yokai.

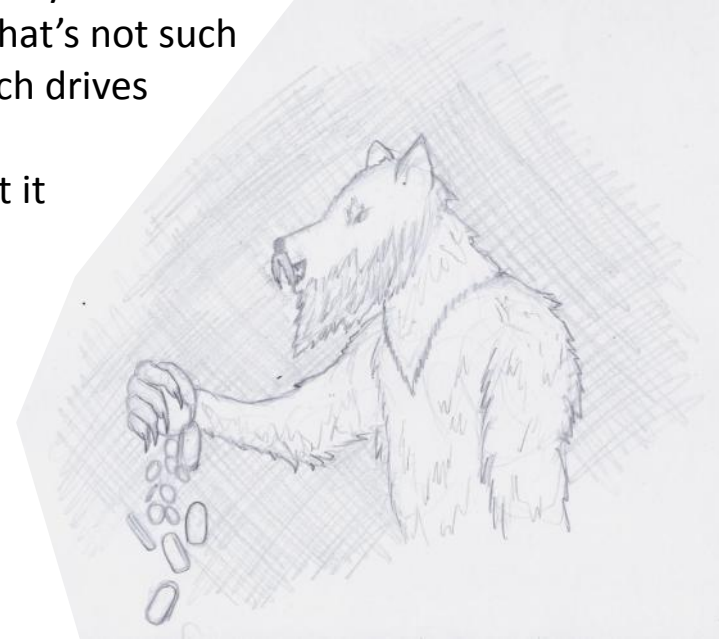
“Well, well,” the yokai grinned at having learned this secret. “The truth is that’s not such a strange fear, to be honest I’m afraid of cooked egg plant because its stench drives me crazy.”

The yokai glanced out the window as he finished speaking and noticed that it was starting to get light so he promised to scare Tasuke the next night.

The next night Tasuke went back to the temple with a big tub filled with cooked eggplant sealed with a tight lid.

At midnight the yokai came along.

“Get ready for tonight I’m going to scare,” you the yokai told the boy as he pulled out a bag full of gold coins and threw it at Tasuke. “So are you scared?”



Tasuke went running around the temple acting horrified at the sight of the gold and causing the yokai to laugh with delight. Tasuke ran up to his tub of eggplant and opened it causing the hot steam to pour out and fill the temple with the smell of cooked eggplant.

The yokai began twitching all over before he threw himself head long out of the temple. It ran out into the garden and grabbed a tree but before he could get away he turned into a mushroom.

The villagers then rejoiced that they had finally gotten rid of the yokai. They bought lots of Tasuke's potions and herbs in gratitude for what he'd done. Tasuke then gathered all his earnings and the gold and left town a wealthy man.

The mushroom still stands near that temple for although people at first wanted to eat it they then worried it might be poisonous for it had once been a yokai after all.





## The Mountain Kami and the Ugly Fish

In ancient times there was a village of prosperous people. They were prosperous because the peasants of the village were friends with the very kami of the mountain. So he helped them to grow good crops, to drive away both pests and the evil influences. Every autumn the kami would return to the mountains and up to the peak as the villagers watched. In the spring we would come down out of the mountain and into the village where the peasants would wait. For they were never without a kami when they planted their rice and so they called him the kami of the rice fields in spring. He was a shy kami of the mountains, whose face would blush with modesty as if he were a young girl.

But something happened in the spring of this story. As always the kami of the mountain came to the country and the farmers planted their rice. They greeted him as they should, with honors as they presented him with gifts and arranged for refreshments. The kami of the mountain waked around the houses, and through the fields and even to the creek where he sat down on the shore to rest. As he sat on the shore of the mountain stream he





looked down at his reflection and wailed at what he saw.  
“Oh, oh! That’s terrible, terrible. I never knew I was such a freak!” he cried.  
“What a face. How embarrassing and shameful.”

The Mountain Kami wept bitter tears, picked up his belongings and ran headlong up to the mountains leaving the bewildered peasants behind. “Wait,” they screamed. “We love you and honor you!”

The mountain kami ran to the mountains without looking back and didn’t hear their cries.

“What will we do if he never comes back?” the frightened peasants asked themselves.

The kami hid himself in the mountain forest, leaving the village in dire trouble. Seedlings became stunted, the flooded fields began to dry and the trees in the mountain forest began to stop growing all together. Not knowing what to do the farmers went to a wise old woman and told her about their misfortune.

“As old as I am, as long as I’ve lived in this world, I don’t remember anything like this mountain kami,” she began.  
“He really is ugly.”

“Yes, really,” the peasants sighed. “But that doesn’t matter.” He’s our friend and we need him.”

“Certainly,” the wise woman agreed. “But he is very shy, and all that time he visited among you he never knew that his face was ugly. And now he is ashamed of it. That is why he fled from you. So you must find someone who is more ugly than the kami of the mountain,” the old woman advised. “Search for the ugliest one in the world.”



“Who else is so ugly as the kami of the mountains? The peasants wondered. But they could not think of anyone. “Okay, I will give you advice,” the old woman told them. “Go up to the creak and catch a mountain fish. Look at it carefully for nobody in the world is so ugly as it with its eyes bugged out.”

“The mountain fish, of course no one is so ugly as that!” the peasants exclaimed happily.

So they went up to the creek and caught the fish, then started laughing.

“Ha, ha, ha, oh what a mug!” They laughed. “Hilarious.”

“Ah yes so ugly!”

They put the fish in a large bucket and ran up to the mountain, where they soon found the entrance to the kami’s home. They knocked on the door.

“Open the door for us kami of the mountain,” they called. “Come and look what we brought you.”

The Kami opened the door of the mountain and looked into the bucket with the fish sitting there, its eyes bugged out, jaws moving up and down.

“Wow!” the kami said with surprise. “There is something even uglier in this world than me. Look at her eyes rotating!” the kami laughed.

So the mountain kami laughed with the peasants, and they returned with the mountain kami full of good humor. So once more the village was able to continue to be prosperous and the rice fields grew plentiful, and the trees matured with plenty of fruit. And the peasants lived with the kami of the mountains in peace and harmony forever more.

