

Ogre and Rashomon Part 2

But though the knight rode very fast the ogre ran faster, and to his disappointment he found himself unable to overtake the monster, who was gradually lost to sight.

Watanabe returned to the gate where the fierce fight had taken place, and got down from his horse. As he did so he stumbled upon something lying on the ground.

Stooping to pick it up he found that it was one of the ogre's huge arms which he must have slashed off in the fight. His joy was great at having secured such a prize, for this was the best of all proofs of his adventure with the ogre. So he took it up carefully and carried it home as a trophy of his victory.

When he got back, he showed the arm to his comrades, who one and all called him the hero of their band and gave him a great feast. His wonderful deed was soon noised abroad in Kyoto, and people from far and near came to see the ogre's arm.

Watanabe now began to grow uneasy as to how he should keep the arm in safety, for he knew that the ogre to whom it belonged was still alive. He felt sure that one day or other, as soon as the ogre got over his scare, he would come to try to get his arm back again. Watanabe therefore had a box made of the strongest wood and banded with iron. In this he placed the arm, and then he sealed down the heavy lid, refusing to open it for anyone. He kept the box in his own room and took charge of it himself, never allowing it out of his sight.

Now one night he heard some one knocking at the porch, asking for admittance.

When the servant went to the door to see who it was, there was only an old woman, very respectable in appearance. On being asked who she was and what was her business, the old woman replied with a smile that she had been nurse to the master of the house when he was a little baby. If the lord of the house were at home she begged to be allowed to see him.

The servant left the old woman at the door and went to tell his master that his old nurse had come to see him. Watanabe thought it strange that she should come at that time of night, but at the thought of his old nurse, who had been like a foster-mother to him and whom he had not seen for a long time, a very tender feeling sprang up for her in his heart. He ordered the servant to show her in.

The old woman was ushered into the room, and after the customary bows and greetings were over, she said:

“Master, the report of your brave fight with the ogre at the Gate of Rashomon is so widely known that even your poor old nurse has heard of it. Is it really true, what every one says, that you cut off one of the ogre’s arms? If you did, your deed is highly to be praised!”

“I was very disappointed,” said Watanabe, “that I was not able take the monster captive, which was what I wished to do, instead of only cutting off an arm!”

“I am very proud to think,” answered the old woman, “that my master was so brave as to dare to cut off an ogre’s arm. There is nothing that can be compared to your courage. Before I die it is the great wish of my life to see this arm,” she added pleadingly.

“No,” said Watanabe, “I am sorry, but I cannot grant your request.”

“But why?” asked the old woman.

“Because,” replied Watanabe, “ogres are very revengeful creatures, and if I open the box there is no telling but that the ogre may suddenly appear and carry off his arm. I have had a box made on purpose with a very strong lid, and in this box I keep the ogre’s arm secure; and I never show it to any one, whatever happens.”

“Your precaution is very reasonable,” said the old woman. “But I am your old nurse, so surely you will not refuse to show ME the arm. I have only just heard of your brave act, and not being able to wait till the morning I came at once to ask you to show it to me.”

Watanabe was very troubled at the old woman’s pleading, but he still persisted in refusing. Then the old woman said:

“Do you suspect me of being a spy sent by the ogre?”

“No, of course I do not suspect you of being the ogre’s spy, for you are my old nurse,” answered Watanabe.

“Then you cannot surely refuse to show me the arm any longer.” entreated the old woman; “for it is the great wish of my heart to see for once in my life the arm of an ogre!”

Watanabe could not hold out in his refusal any longer, so he gave in at last, saying:

“Then I will show you the ogre’s arm, since you so earnestly wish to see it. Come, follow me!” and he led the way to his own room, the old woman following.

When they were both in the room Watanabe shut the door carefully, and then going towards a big box which stood in a corner of the room, he took off the heavy lid. He then called to the old woman to come near and look in, for he never took the arm out of the box.

“What is it like? Let me have a good look at it,” said the old nurse, with a joyful face.

She came nearer and nearer, as if she were afraid, till she stood right against the box. Suddenly she plunged her hand into the box and seized the arm, crying with a fearful voice which made the room shake:

“Oh, joy! I have got my arm back again!”

And from an old woman she was suddenly transformed into the towering figure of the frightful ogre!

Watanabe sprang back and was unable to move for a moment, so great was his astonishment; but recognizing the ogre who had attacked him at the Gate of Rashomon, he determined with his usual courage to put an end to him this time. He seized his sword, drew it out of its sheath in a flash, and tried to cut the ogre down.

So quick was Watanabe that the creature had a narrow escape. But the ogre sprang up to the ceiling, and bursting through the roof, disappeared in the mist and clouds.

In this way the ogre escaped with his arm. The knight gnashed his teeth with disappointment, but that was all he could do. He waited in patience for another opportunity to dispatch the ogre. But the latter was afraid of Watanabe's great strength and daring, and never troubled Kyoto again. So once more the people of the city were able to go out without fear even at night time, and the brave deeds of Watanabe have never been forgotten!