

## A Story on a Wife

A millionaire's daughter was 22 years old, while her husband was 25. The two were in love with each other.

But the wife was of delicate health, and unfortunately, two years after she had gotten married, she came down with an illness. At first, it was thought a minor illness, but it became serious. The disease was getting worse and worse. All doctors abandoned hope of her recovery.

"I can't thank you enough for your attendance on me every day. You're the only man who is kind to me. I have the nicest husband in the world. What a pity it is to part from you! Now, I'm looking at myself in the mirror. It tells me I'd die today. I'd like you to ask a last favor so that I might die happily."

"Don't say you are dying. But what is it? I'll be willing to do anything you ask me," her husband encouraged her.

She said to him in a weak voice,

"It is not an easy one for you, rather, it might be impossible to do so. Even so, I must ask you a favor before dying. After my death, sooner or later, your relatives will recommend you someone for your second wife. But promise me.... Can you promise me that you'll never get remarried?"

"Believe me," with confidence, "I'll never have any wife except you."

"You're so kind," she tried to sit up on her bed, "I'm so relieved to hear that," she said, then she fell on her back and died.

Since then, he had been out of shape. As the time passed, he became thin and feeble until he looked as if he were a ghost. Doctors could not figure the cause of his disease. They said it might come from his mental trouble.

His mother was so worried about him and asked, with tears in her eyes, to tell her the real reason he broke down. He didn't answer her at first, but he couldn't reject his mother's request,

"Mother, I'll I tell you the truth. But I'm afraid you won't believe me.... She hasn't be able to rest in peace in the other world. She comes to me every night, and sleeps with me. Though she is not warm, she looks as if she was alive. She always asks me not to tell anybody that she has come back every night. She comes to me when I fall asleep and stays with me for nights. She leaves me when we hear the temple's bells."

His mother was so afraid, and hurried to the priest at his temple to get help from Buddha.

After listening to her story about her son's dead wife, the priest said to her calmly,

"This is not the first experience for me. I might help your son out of his agony. Please tell your relatives to come to this temple as soon as possible. We must open her grave."

The next day, they gathered in front of her grave. Her coffin was lifted and at last the lid was taken off. Those people present there were frightened to see the body. With a smile, it looked more beautiful than she had passed away. The priest ordered them to take it out from the coffin. They touched it with fear and trembling hands. The body was warm and soft as if it were alive. The priest wrote a sutra all over the body and returned it into the coffin, after that he prayed for her in peace in the next world. Since then she had never appeared in front of her former husband.(2015.11.1 With Itaya & Paula)



## ある妻のはなし

長者の娘は二十二歳、その夫は二十五歳、二人は愛し合っていました。しかし、連れ添って二年、病弱な妻は、病の床に臥せってしまいました。最初は軽く思われていた症状が日増しに悪化し、ついにはどんな名医も匙を投げるほどになりました。

「あなたに毎日、看病していただき感謝の気持ちで一杯です。私にやさしくして下さい本当にありがとうございます。わたしは素晴らしい夫を持ちました。手許の鏡を見ると、私は今日死ぬようです。あなたとお別れするのは辛うございます。幸せな気持ちで死んでいけるよう、あなたに最後のお願ひがあります。」

「死ぬなんて言うな。でも願ひとは何だ？お前の頼みとあれば何でも喜んでやるぞ。」夫は妻を励ました。

弱々しく妻は言いました。

「たやすいことではありません、無理かもしれません。だとしても、死ぬ前にお願ひいたします。わたしが死ねば、遅かれ早かれ、親類縁者の人たちは、きっとあなたに後妻を勧めるでしょう。でも約束して・・・決して後妻は娶（めと）らないと約束して下さい。」

「約束するよ。」きっぱりと、「私はお前の他に妻は持たない。」

「ありがとうございます。」妻は床から起き上がろうとしました。「それを聞いて安心しました。」そして、ぼったり倒れて死んでしまいました。

それからと言うもの、夫は体調が優れませんでした。時の経過とともにやせ細り、顔色も青ざめ、まるで幽霊のようでした。病気の原因は、医者にも分かりませんでした。心の病（やまい）から来ているかもしれないと言われました。

母親は息子の体を案じ、泣きながら、病気の本当の原因を話してくれるよう頼みました。息子は初めは打ち明けませんでした。母親の頼みを拒むことはできませんでした。

「お母さん、本当のことをお話します。信じてもらえとは思いませんが・・・妻はあの世で成仏できないのです。毎晩、私の所に帰ってきて、私のそばに寝るのです。温かくはありませんが、まるで生きていた時のままです。そして自分が毎晩ここに来ていることは誰にも漏らしてくれるなど、いつも頼みます。私が眠ろうとするとやって来て、明け方までおります。お寺の鐘が聞こえると帰って行くのです。」

母親はひどく驚いて、さっそく檀那寺に出かけ、仏陀に祈ってくれるように、住職に頼みました。一部始終を聞いたのち、住職は静かに言いました。

「前にもこのようなことを経験しました。ご子息を苦しみから救ってあげられるかもしれません。縁者の方々に、できるだけ早く寺に来ようお伝えください。墓を開けなくてはなりません。」

翌日、親戚の者たちは墓の前に集まりました。棺が持ち上げられ、蓋が取られました。居合わせた者たちは遺骸を見てぎょっとしました。顔に笑みを浮かべ、生前より美しく見えました。住職は遺骸を棺から取り出すよう言いつけました。一同は震える手で恐る恐る触りました。それは生温かく、生きているようにしなやかでした。住職が遺骸全体に梵字を書くと、遺骸は棺に戻されました。住職が来世での成仏を祈ってやりました。それからは、二度と夫のところには来なくなりました。

原作：小泉八雲：「おかめのはなし」（骨董）より

