

Two Priests

Long, long ago there lived a poor man and his wife in Kyo, the capital at that time. One day the wife complained to her husband about their life of poverty.

"I'm fed up with my poor life. We don't have enough food to eat. I've always worn the same kimono: I never bought a new one. We are poorer than beggars. I can't stand this miserable life. If you would be a robber or a burglar, I might be happy because I could buy a new kimono."

"What a silly woman you are! I don't want to be such a villain. You see, there are lots of poor people around us. Some of them are poorer than we are," the husband scolded her.

"Then I want to get a divorce from you. Why don't you divorce me? I'll find a rich man and remarry him," she said.

He loved his wife so much that he never imagined the days without her. He was worried about her complaining every day. He was afraid that his wife would be disgusted with him.

One evening, he passed by a woman who was wearing a nice kimono. Before he could realize it, he killed the woman, and robbed her of her clothes and money. He hurried back and said to his wife, "You told me that you want me to be a burglar. I killed a woman and got her clothes and money. Oh, I am a terrible man."

But she wasn't surprised to hear that, rather, she looked happy to see the beautiful kimono he brought. He still loved her. But he felt a sense of strangeness for his wife.

The next day the wife wore the kimono he'd brought and went out. It was a big shock when he knew his wife was killed by someone right after she went out.

"That must be punishment for the murder I did," he thought.

The man left the house and climbed to Mt. Koya (in Wakayama) to become a priest. He gave his prayer day after day and kept holding a memorial service for the woman he had killed.

One evening, he had a visitor who had just become a priest. They talked with each other about themselves. The newcomer said to him,

"I'd like to know what made you become a priest. As for me, I used to live in Kyo. But I had a tragedy there and threw everything away to be a priest."

The host priest said to the new priest,

"I also lived there. But I committed an outrageous thing and became a priest."

The visitor said to the priest,

"If it doesn't bother you, would you mind telling it to me in more detail? I won't talk about you to others. I promise."

The priest told him about his sin. The visitor, who showed an interest in it, asked him some questions in a row,

"When did you kill the woman? What was the color of her Kimono? How old did you think she was?"

The priest talked to him without keeping anything back. He listened to it very seriously, nodding many times while listening. When the priest's confession reached the end, the listener said to the



priest.

"What a story it is! To tell you the truth, the woman you killed must have been my beloved wife. I have to tell you I also killed a woman I met just the next day. That woman wore my wife's kimono. I asked her when and where she had got it. She didn't say anything and ran away from me. I ran after her and stuck her to death on the street. Suddenly I decided to be a priest... Without these horrible incidents, I would never have been a priest nor learned the doctrine of Buddhism. In other words, you led me to become a priest. Let's hold a memorial service for our late wives together."

They took hands with each other and began to cry. They secluded themselves in the mountain to practice severe asceticism.(2008.2.1 With Itaya)



二人の僧

むかし、むかし、京の都に貧しい男とその妻がおりました。ある日のこと、妻は貧乏暮らしを夫にぼやきました。

「貧乏暮らしはもううんざり。食べるものもろくにないし、いつも同じ着物。新しいのを買ったこともない。物乞いの方がまだましだわ。こんな惨めな生活はいや、もうたくさん。あなたが盗人か追いはぎにでもなってくれたら、うれしいわ。新しい着物が買えるわ。」

「馬鹿なこと言うのはよせ！そんなひどいやつにはならん。いいか、世の中には貧しい人が沢山いるんだ。中には俺たちよりも貧しいものもいるんだ。」夫は妻をたしなめました。

「じゃ、あなたとは別れたいわ。別れましょう。金持ちでも見つけて一緒になるわ。」

それでも夫は妻を大事にしていたので、妻のいない生活は考えられませんでした。毎日妻の不満に頭を悩ませていました。自分に嫌気がさすのではないかと不安でした。

ある晩のこと、綺麗な着物を着た婦人が通り過ぎました。我を忘れ、その婦人を殺害し、着物と金銭を奪い取りました。急いで帰宅し、妻に言いました。

「追いはぎになってくれ、と言ったな。女を殺して、着物と金を持ってきた。俺はとんでもないことをした。」

しかし、それを聞いた妻は驚くどころか、その綺麗な着物を見て、うれしそうでした。それでも男は妻を愛しく思っていたましたが、ここに至って妻に対して違和感を感じるようになりました。

翌日、妻はその着物を着て出かけました。身の毛がよだつような出来事が起こりました。家を出た直後、妻が誰かに殺されたのです。

「俺がしたこと天罰に違いない。」

男は出家するために高野山に登りました。日々経を読み、自分が手にかけてた女の人の供養をしました。

ある晩、出家したばかりの僧が訪ねてきました。二人は互いの身の上話をしました。客僧は僧に尋ねました。

「どうして出家したのか教えて下さい。私の方は、以前京に住んでいましたが、災難がありまして思い切って出家しました。」

「私も京にいました。しかしとんでもないことをして出家しました。」と僧は客僧に答えました。

「差し支えなければ、もう少し詳しく話してもらえないでしょうか。絶対に他言しませんから。」

僧は自らの罪（つみ）について話しました。客僧は、関心を示し、たて続けに尋ねました。

「いつのことですか？着物の色は？歳の頃は？」

僧は、思い出すまま語りました。客僧は、途中で何度も頷きながら、聞き入りました。僧の話が終わりになろうとすると、客僧は僧に言いました。

「何とすることだ！あなたが手にかけてのは私の妻に違いない。実は、私もちょうどその翌日出会った女の人を殺してしまいました。その人は妻の着物を着ていたのです。いつ、どこで、手に入れたんだ、と聞いても何も答えずに逃げたので、追いかけて一突きにしたんです。それで、出家することにしたのです・・・あの一連の忌まわしいことがなかったら、出家することも、仏典に触れることもなかったでしょう。すなわち、あなたのおかげで私は出家できたのです。亡き妻達のために二人で供養いたしましょう。」

二人は手を取り合って泣きました。二人の僧は、山にこもり、厳しい修行をつみました。(Kudos)



