

A Wife Who Eat Nothing

Long, long ago there lived a middle-aged man in a village who hadn't had a wife yet.

One day he talked to his friends when he went cutting trees with them in a mountain.

"I do want to have a wife who cooks and washes for me. But I'm so poor that I have little to eat. So I want a wife who eats nothing."

A few days later, he had a visit of a young beautiful lady at the front door, who said to him,

"I'm a woman who eats nothing. Why don't you marry me?"

Marrying her, he found it true that she ate nothing, even a grain of rice for breakfast, lunch, dinner.

But he found, after she had come, the rice in a straw bag and miso, or fermented soybean paste in a pot missing too much.

He thought it something strange.

"I'm going shopping in a town." said he to his wife.

He pretended to go to a town and returned and hid himself in the attic while she was in the toilet. He saw her through a hole. She took a lot of rice out of the bag, much miso out of the pot and began to cook them.

Finishing cooking her meals, she began to comb her hair. To his great surprise, he found a big mouth in her head. She was a mountain monster. She put rice and miso soup into it one after another.

Knowing her secret, he said to the monster,

"Though you said you ate nothing, I understood who you were. I want you to leave here."

"I'll return to my home town in a mountain, but I want to get this huge tub." said the monster.

"If you want it, you can take it." said the man.

The monster said to him, looking into the tub.

"There is a worm in this, why don't you take it out?"

The man also looked into it, when she pushed him into it from behind covered it.

She transferred in the figure of a mountain monster, and carried it with him in it and ran toward the mountain, saying in a loud voice to her fellows.

"I have a delicious food. Come to me quickly."

Thinking of the way he get out of the tub, he uncovered it, jumped up and held the branch of a tree. He succeeded in getting out of it and ran away from her, while the monster ran after him.

He rushed into the bush where many Japanese iris were growing, which were believed to drive away the monster.

"I can't catch him, because these Irises are my poison. If I enter it, my body will be melted. I can't do anything."

The monster returned to the mountain. (2001.2.01)



食わず女房

むかし、むかし、いまだ身を固めていない独り者がおりました。ある日のこと。男は木を切りに出かけた時、仲間に言いました。

「飯を作って、洗濯をしてくれる妻が欲しいな。だが貧乏で食べる物もない。いっそもも食えない妻が欲しいものだ。」

数日後、男の所に若い娘がやってきました。

「私は何も食べません。一緒になってくれませんか。」

一緒になってみると、確かに女は、朝も昼も夜も、ご飯一粒食べません。

しかし、女が来てからというもの、米びつの米も、つぼに入った味噌もいやに少なくなっていました。男は不思議に思っていました。

「町に出かけてくる。」と言うと、夫は出かけるふりをして、妻が厠（かわや）に入っている隙に屋根裏に隠れました。穴から覗くと、女は米びつから米を、つぼから味噌をごっそり取り出すと料理を始めました。

食事が出来上がると、女は髪をとかし始めました。何と驚いたことに、頭に大きな口がぼっかりあいています。女は山姥（やまんば）だったのです。ご飯と味噌汁を口にどんどん入れていきます。秘密を知った男は、女に言いました。

「お前は何も食べないと言ったが、正体がわかったぞ。すぐに出て行け。」

「いいわ。でもあの大きな風呂が欲しいな。」

「欲しければ、持って行け。」

女は、風呂桶を覗き込みながら言いました。

「虫が入ってる。出してくれない。」

男が風呂桶を覗き込んだ瞬間、女は後ろから男を風呂桶に押し込めて蓋をしました。

女は山姥に身を変えると、風呂桶もろとも男を担いで、山に急ぎました。そして仲間に大声で言いました。

「ごちそうを持ってきたわ。早くおいで。」

桶からの脱出方法を考えていた男は蓋をあけ跳び上がると木の枝に掴まりました。脱出に成功し、男は逃げます。山姥が追いかけます。やぶに逃げ込むと、そこには菖蒲（しょうぶ）が沢山生えておりました。山姥はその植物が大嫌いです。

「駄目だ。あの草には毒がある。体が溶けてしまう。ここまで。」

山姥は、山に戻りました。(kudo)

