## The Old Men Under the Pine Trees

Long, long ago there lived a beautiful lady in an island in the southern part of Japan.

One day when she was washing clothes in a river, a famous priest passed by her.

He said to her in a low voice,

"You are young and beautiful but you have only another three years to live in."

She was so surprised at his words that she told the whole story to her parents on coming back home.

"It's so bad. You must find the priest again to ask him for your long life."

She went out to find him and said to him,

"Mr. Priest. What shall I do to live a long life?"

"That's too bad. I know one's life, but I can't prolong it."

She was so shocked to hear it and burst into tears.

"Don't cry. Well, I'll teach you a good news." said the priest. "If you go straight to the North about 40 kilometers, you'll find a high mountain, which is 1000 meters high. Climb the mountain up and down, and you'll find another mountain, which is 2000 meters high. Climb the mountain up and down, and you'll find another mountain, which is 3000 meters high, and three big pine trees at the foot of the mountain. One is 20 meters high, another is 30 meters high and the other is 40 meters high. You'll find three old men under the pine trees. Two are playing Go(Japanese chess). The other one with his gray beard is reading a book. If you go to them and treat them Sake(Japanese alcohol) as long as they are satisfied. When they are satisfied at your treat, you can ask them for your long life."

Hearing this, she felt so happy.

On the next day, she started her journey toward the North with a bottle of Sake.

She walked and walked, and found the first mountain. She climbed it up and down and the second mountain up and down until she found the third mountain. She found the three tall pine trees at the foot of the mountain, under which she found three old men.

It was true that the two were playing Go and the one was reading a book, but they never moved as if they were sleeping.

"What shall I do?" thought she.

She also felt like sleeping after waiting for them to move for a long time.

She at last fell asleep leaning against the pine tree.

Many years have passed since she fell asleep. Even now she is sleeping under the pine tree.(2002.08.13)

## 松の木の下の老人

むかし、むかし、日本の南のある島に美しい娘が住んでおりました。 ある日、川で洗濯をしていると、高僧がやって来て、低い声で言いました。 「あなたは若くてきれいです、でも余命三年です。」

娘はとても驚き、家に帰ると両親に話しました。

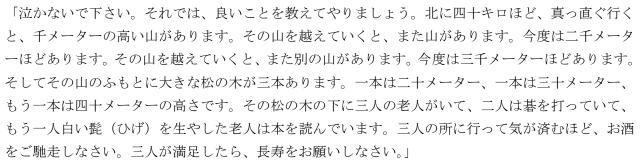
「それはひどい。もう一度そのお坊さんを見つけて、長生きできるようにお願いしなさい。」

娘はお坊さんを見つけて、言いました。

「お坊さん、長生きするためにはどうしたらよいのでしょう。」

「お気の毒です。人には寿命があり、延ばすことはできません。」

娘は、とてもショックで泣き出しました。



これを聞いて、娘はたいそう嬉しくなりました。

次の日、酒の瓶を持って北に旅立ちました。

どんどん歩いていくと、最初の山がありました。山を越えると二つ目の山、そして三つ目の山がありました。その山のふもとに高い松の木が三本ありました。木の下に三人の老人がおりました。まさに二人は碁を、一人は本を読んでいました。でも三人と眠っているかのように全く動きませんでした。「どうしよう。」

娘は、三人が動くのを待っていて自分も眠くなりました。そして松の木にもたれて眠ってしまいました。そして何年もが経ちました。今も娘は松の木の下で眠っています。(Kudos)

