

The Undutiful Daughter and the Dutiful Daughter-in-law

Long, long ago there lived a fisherman in a fishing village in Chikuzen (in Fukuoka Prefecture). When the fisherman passed away, he left his wife and two children; a son and a daughter. The son was on good terms with his brother-in-law. They used to go fishing by boat in the offing.

One day in a midsummer, while the two men had been away from home for fishing, a debt collector came to their house to press them to pay a debt. The old woman, who looked after things at home while they were working, said to the collector,

"Would you wait for my sons to return from fishing? Then we'll surely pay back our debts."

"I've heard the same excuses before. I'm tired of hearing about that. If you can't pay back your debt now, I'll stay here until you give back my money, or I'll take everything in your house with me."

"But as you see, my husband left nothing valuable here in our house. You can take nothing with you. How miserable I am! I don't have money for a stick of incense for my late husband on a Buddhist altar. I might as well as die as I live in misery."

While she was grieving for her misfortune, her daughter was practicing dancing for the *Bon* festival (Buddhist souls' festival held at midsummer to pay homage to the spirits of dead ancestors that are believed to return during that time) on the earthen floor without minding her mother's grief.

"We are now in strained circumstances," the old woman criticized her daughter, "this isn't the time for practicing dancing when we live from hand to mouth." But her daughter kept dancing, ignoring her mother's complaint.

"Don't you have ears? Can't you hear what I am telling you? You are my own daughter and already 18 years old. Your sister-in-law is two years younger than you, but she is considerate of me. She puts up with this poverty and never informs her own parents of the hardship. Though it is only half a year since she came here as a bride of my son, she changed her belongings for money. I have no excuse for her. You should follow her example."

Hearing this, her daughter threw her sandal at her mother and tried to go outside, which made her mother more furious.

"I can't endure you any more," the mother said.

She took a pair of scissors in her hand and ran after her daughter. Her daughter-in-law was so surprised and held her mother-in-law,

"Will you calm yourself down, please! Don't get furious!"

"Leave me! I can't let my cruel daughter live any longer."

She tried to shake off her daughter-in-law's hands. But the young woman held the old woman tightly and tried to calm her down,

"She will notice what she is doing now sooner or later. Please forgive her."

Taking off the comb and the ornament from her hair, she went out with them. Soon she came back with a bundle of incense and a few *manjus* (steamed bun stuffed with sweet red-bean paste) for



her late father-in-law.

"How kind you are! I can't apologize enough to you for your kindness. You have pawned what you had brought from your home too much," the mother said, weeping.

"I don't mind at all. I'm happy with my husband. We will not always be poor. Someday happiness will visit us," she said, smiling.

Watching this situation, the debt collector was moved so much. He couldn't believe that there was such a kind woman in this world, and said to the old woman with tears in his eyes,

"I was so moved by your daughter-in-law's kindness. What a lucky woman you are to have such a kind daughter-in-law. We can never buy such a woman for money. Live happily together!"

Saying so, he took out a few coins from his wallet.

"This is my gift to your daughter-in-law. I'd like to offer her more, but this is all I have. I'll cancel your debt. Please lead a happier life," saying so, he left there.

Soon her son and her son-in-law returned home from the sea with a big catch. Their mother talked to them about what had happened during their absence. The son, hearing about his sister's cruelty and his wife's kindness, called his sister to him and uttered her,

"What a cruel woman you are! I can't suppress my anger to you. I can't admit you are my sister. Get out of my property right now!"

He drove his sister out immediately. A few months later he let his brother-in-law remarry a kind young woman from another family. Poor as they were, they helped each other, worked hard and were dutiful to their old mother. Soon they felt a bit of signs of prosperity in their household. (2014/03/1 With Itaya)



親不孝娘と親孝行嫁

むかし、むかし筑前（福岡県）のある漁村に、漁師の一家がおりましたが、漁師は家族を残して先立ちました。あとには、妻や二人の子供たち、息子と娘が残されました。息子は、その妹の連れ合いと馬が合い、沖合いの漁によく二人で出かけました。

真夏のある日、二人が漁に出ている間に、借金取りが貸した金の取立てにやってきました。留守中、家を守っていた老婆は、借金取りにこう言いました。

「息子たちが漁から戻ってくるまで待ってください。そうすれば、必ず借金をお返しします。」

「いつも同じことを。もう聞き飽きた。今借金を返すことができなければ、金ができるまでここにいるぞ。さもなければ、家の中のものを全部持って行くぞ。」

「でもご覧の通り、これと言った金目（かねめ）のものは何も残さず夫は逝ってしまいました。持って行くものは何もございません。情けないものです！仏になったうちの人にあげる線香を買うお金もありません。こんな惨めな生活なら死んだ方がましです。」

老母が不幸を嘆いているのを尻目に、娘はわれ関せずと、土間で盆踊りの稽古に励んでいました。

「今は大変な状況なんですよ。」老母は娘を非難しました。「毎日やっとならしているのに踊っている場合ではないでしょう。」

娘は、母親の言うことを無視して踊り続けました。

「聞こえないのかい？お前に話していることがわからないのかい？お前は私が産んだ娘（こ）で、もう十八だよ。うちの嫁はお前よりも二つも若いのに、お前よりずっとやさしくしてくれる。こんな貧乏にも我慢して、ご両親には決して泣き言を言わない。ここへ嫁いでまだ半年あまり、嫁入りのとき持ってきたものは、みんなお金に代えてしまった。本当に申し訳ない。お前も嫁を見習いなさい。」

これを聞き、娘は下駄を母親に投げつけ、家から出ようとしたので、母親はさらに激怒しました。

「もう我慢できない。」

母親は鋏（はさみ）を手に取り、娘を追いかけました。嫁は驚いて、姑を抑えました。

「落ち着いてください！どうか、気を静めてください。」

「離しなさい！こんなひどい娘は殺してやる。」

母親は嫁の手を払いのけようとした。しかし若い嫁は老母をしっかり抱きしめ、落ち着くのを待ちました。

「遅かれ早かれ自分のしていることに気がつきます。どうか許してやってください。」

嫁は、髪から櫛（くし）と髪飾りをはずすと、出かけていきました。そしてまもなく線香の束とお供え用の饅頭を数個持って戻ってきました。

「本当にやさしい嫁（こ）だね！いくら詫びても詫びきれない。実家から持ってきたものはみんな質草になってしまったね。」

母親は泣きながら言いました。

「いいえ構いません。夫といられるだけで幸せです。いつも不幸とは限りません。いつか幸せがやって来ます。」

嫁は微笑みながら言いました。

これを見ていた借金取りは、とても感動しました。世の中にこんなやさしい女（ひと）がいるとは信じられませんでした。目頭を熱くして老女に言いました。

「お嫁さんのやさしさにいたく感動しました。こんなやさしいお嫁さんが来てくれて、あなたは本当



に幸せ者ですよ！いくらお金を出してもこんな嫁さんは買えませんよ。お幸せに！」

そう言うと、借金取りは財布から小銭を取り出し、

「これは私からのお嫁さんへの褒美です。もっとあげたいのですが、これしか手持ちがありません。借金は帳消しにしましょう。それではお達者で。」

そう言うと、その場を去りました。

まもなく息子と娘婿がどっさり魚を獲（と）って戻ってきました。母親は二人のいない間に起きたことを話しました。息子は妹の思いやりのない振る舞いと、妻のやさしさを聞いて、妹を呼びつけ申し渡しました。

「お前はとんでもない奴だ。もう我慢ならん。妹とは認めない。ただちにここから出て行け！」

兄は妹を即刻追い出しました。数ヵ月後、婿を別の家の若いやさしい娘と再婚させました。貧しさの中にあっても、お互い助け合い、一生懸命働き年老いた母親に尽くしました。まもなく、わずかながらゆとりが出てき始めました。(kudos)



西鶴「胸こそ踊れ此盆前