In the Bass Drum

Long, long ago there lived a hardworking but poor man who had a hard life in spite of running a textile shop in a town called Nisijin in Kyoto. Not paying a lot of debt, he decided to sell his properties and leave the town secretly with his family.



Hearing the rumor, his fellows discussed the way to help him from the difficulty,

"Life is strange! It is beyond reason that an honest man like him has a poor life and must leave the town. He believes in Gods and Buddhism. He takes care of others. He never does wrong things. We have responsibility to help him at all costs."

Ten of his fellows visited his house with ten bottles of Sake and a pot in which each of them put 10 ryos. The leader said to him, showing the money,

"We have 100 ryos in this pot. Why don't you keep your business using this money as a capital? Soon the money will be 1000 ryos."

The poor man was so happy to hear it that he began to weep with joy.

His friends started to drink and dance so that they could encourage him until they staggered home drunken at dawn.

On the other hand, he was made to drink so much that he was now mortally drunken in the room until he was woken by his wife,

"Wake up! The debt collectors will come soon. Let's pay off loans with the money given by your fellows," She continued. Her husband woke up with a surprise, "Open the pot and show me the money."

He opened the pot to find it empty.

"What's the matter? There's no money in it." They were so surprised and embarrassed.

"It is impolite to doubt your friends but the money itself never disappears. Someone of your friends must have stolen the money." She said with tears in her eyes.

"This must be our destiny. You're right, but I can't doubt my friends." He said.

"It is regrettable that we can't reward the kindness of them. We'd rather die than live this kind of miserable life." She said.

"So would I. We'd kill ourselves rather than have malice against others." He said.

"I did my best in this world, so I have no regrets. My only care is our two sons. Why not take them to the next world?"

They changed their clothes into white clothes. After that, they woke two sons up and made them put on new clothes.

Now it's time they went to the next world. They sat before the Buddhist alter and the father tried to

pull out a knife from his chest, when an old housekeeper rushed into the room,

"What are you trying to do? I was overhearing all the dialogues. If you die, only the parents should die. What a sin these two cute boys have! I'll bring them up well instead of you."

As she cried loudly, everyone in the neighbor woke up to come to the house. The family missed a chance to commit suicide..

Before long the rumor that the family tried to kill themselves spread the town. The ten friends came together to the house and asked the cause of the matter.

"Indeed there were only ten of us in this room last night. It's true that the money never disappears of itself, nor is there no sign that a thief entered this room. It is difficult to imagine that those who had given the money stole the money. It's indeed a mystery." One of them said.

"Anyway, we can't solve this difficult incident. It would be better to ask for the magistrate office." They submitted a petition saying about the incident and asking for the solution.

A few days later, they got a letter from it saying this;

'The ten persons, with each of their wives, shall appear before a magistrate tomorrow. If he has no wife, any woman will be all right.'

On the very day, a magistrate said to them in the office,

"All of you are responsible for the missing money, because you were so drunk and didn't notice it had gone. As a punishment, I'll order you to carry that bass drum to the shrine in the west with the long bar on your shoulders with your wife or a woman." He pointed at the drum in the garden.

They drew lots for turns and two pairs carried the drum a day. As the drum was so heavy for the two to carry and it took a few hours to go to the destination, the wife or the woman never failed to complain about it when the street got empty. It's like this;

"It's so heavy. Why should we carry this kind of heavy drum to the shrine, in spite of giving money to the poor? It's nonsense. You should not help people in need from now on."

To tell the truth, a wise boy was hiding in the drum. That was why it was so heavy.

The magistrate listened to the boy in detail about the couple's dialogues every evening.

On the fourth day, the boy said to the boss like this;

"Today, I had an interesting conversation. She despised her husband and she cried to him, 'You're so foolish, silly and stupid.' The husband tired to calm her down in vain. At last he said to her in a low voice, 'Be patient for a while. It's not so easy to get 100 ryos.' Listening to it, she said, 'Where is the money now?' He said, 'It's in the closet."

The magistrate called the couple and asked them severely until at last he confessed his crime.

"What an outrageous man you are to steal the money which was given on the mercy of the people! Though I should order a severe punishment, you once gave the man 10 ryos. So, only this time I'll save your life. But you are not allowed to stay in this town. I order both of you to leave this town separately forever."

The stolen money was returned to the poor man. On the other hand, the pair were exiled from their town; one is to the east, the other to the west.(2020.1.10)

太鼓の中

むかし、むかし、京都西陣の町に織物屋を営む男がおりました。懸命に働けど苦しい生活を送っていました。多額の借金を返済できず、家財を売り、密かに家族で町を出ることにしました。



男の仲間が、このうわさをを耳にし、男を苦境から救う手立てを話し合いました。

「人生とはわからないものだ!あんな真面目な男が、貧乏な生活を送って、町を出なければならないとは、全く理解できない。奴は神仏を信じ、他人のことを気にかけ、悪いことは一度もしたことがない。是が非でも奴を助けてあげなければならない。」

仲間十人は、酒十升とそれぞれが 10 両ずつ入れた壺を携えて男の家を訪れました。長(おさ)が、お金を見せながら、こう言いました。

「この壺に中に 100 両入っている。この金を元金として、商いを続けてください。さすれば、100 両が 1000 両になるでしょう。」

男は、その話を聞いて嬉しくて涙が出てきました。仲間は、男を励まそうと飲んで騒いで、 明け方千鳥足で帰って行きました。

男も、大層飲まされて、妻に起こされるまで、熟睡していました。

「起きて下さい!借金取りがまもなく来ますよ。お友達から頂いたお金で借金を返しましょう。」夫は驚いて目を覚ましました。妻は話を続けました。「壺を開けてお金を見せて。」 夫が壺を開けると中は空っぽでした。

「金がない。どういうことだ。」二人は、驚いて困惑しました。

「お前さんの仲間を疑いたくはないけど、お金は自分では消えないわ。誰かが盗んだんだ わ。」妻は、目に涙をためながら言いました。

「これも定めだな。お前の言う通りだ。でも仲間は信じたい。」

「皆さんの好意に答えられないのは残念なことです。こんな惨めな生活を送るくらいならいっそ死んでしまったほうがましだわ。」

二人は、白無垢に着替えると、二人の息子を起こし、新しい着物を着させました。あの世に旅立つ準備はできました。家族全員で仏壇の前に座ると、父親が懐から小刀を取りました。その時、年老いたお手伝いさんが部屋に飛び込んできました。

「何をしようとしているんですか?話は全て立ち聞きしていました。死ぬというのなら親だけ死ぬべきです。二人のかわいい息子さんに何の罪があるというのでしょう!私が代わりに育てます。」

隣の人たちが、大きな泣き声を耳にして、やってきました。家族は心中の機会を逃しました。

一家が自殺を図ろうとしたといううわさが、まもなく町中に広まりました。仲間十人が 訪れ、理由を尋ねました。 「確かに昨晚この部屋にいたのは私たち十人だけだった。お金が勝手に消えることはない し、泥棒がこの部屋に入ったはずがない。お金を出した者がお金を盗んだというのも考え られない。どういうことだ。」一人が言いました。

「とにかく、この難しい事件を解くのは容易ではない。奉行所にお願いしたほうがいいだろう。」

仲間たちは、事件のいきさつと解決をお願いする陳情書を奉行所に出しました。 数日後、こんな書状が届きました。

「関係者 10 人とその妻は、明日奉行所に出頭すべし。妻なき時は、女を同伴すべし。」 当日、奉行が、庭にある太鼓を指さしながら、こう言いました。

「そなた全員にその無くなった金の責任がある。そなたらは、大酒を飲み、金が無くなったのに気が付かなかった。罰として、妻もしくは女と長棒を担いで、あの太鼓を南の神社まで運ぶことを命ずる。」

くじで順番を決めると、一日二組が太鼓を運びました。太鼓は二人で運ぶには大層重く、 目的地まで行くのに数時間かかりましたので、妻もしくは女は、人通りが無くなると必ず 不満を漏らしました。

「とても重い。貧乏人にお金をあげたのに、何でこんな重い太鼓を神社に運ばなければならないの?馬鹿げているわ。これからは困っている人を助けるべきではないわ。」

実は、太鼓の中に賢い子どもが隠れていたので、重かったのです。

四日目、子どもは上司にこんなことを言いました。

「今日興味深い話を聞きました。奥さんが旦那さんを軽蔑して、こう叫んでいました。『バカ、ばか、馬鹿。』旦那さんは奥さんをなだめようとしましたが駄目で、小声でこう言いました。『しばらくの辛抱だ。100 両を手に入れるのはそんな簡単なことではない。』すると奥さんが、『お金はどこにあるの?』と聞くと、『押し入れにある。』と旦那さんが答えました。」奉行は二人を呼び出し、厳しく問い詰めると、とうとう白状しました。

「善意で与えられたお金を盗むとは何たる不届き者よ!厳罰を処するところだが、一旦は 10 両を男に与えた。よって今回だけは命は助けてやろう。しかしこの町に留まること許さん。二度とこの町に踏み入れてはならん。」

お金は、男に戻り、被告人二人は一人は東へ、もう一人は西へと追放されました。(kudos)