



JAPANESE SHORT STORIES

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THE STORY OF YONOSUKE

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THE HELL SCREEN

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THE HELL SCREEN

I

THE GRAND LORD of Horikawa is the greatest lord that Japan ever had. Her later generations will never see such a great lord again. Rumor has it that before his birth, Daitoku-Myo-O¹ appeared to her ladyship, his mother, in a dream. From birth he was a most extraordinary man. Everything he did was beyond ordinary expectations. To mention just a few examples, the grandeur and bold design of his mansion at Horikawa are far beyond our mediocre conceptions. Some say that his character and conduct parallel those of the Emperor I² of China and the Emperor Yang.³ But this comparison may well be likened to the blind man's description of the elephant. For it was far from his intention

¹ Daitoku-Myo-O * is a three-faced and six-armed god that guards the west, astride a large white bull, being one of the five great kings that appear in the Chanavyua sutra.

² The First Emperor of China established the great Chinese Empire in 221 B.C.

³ The Chinese Emperor Yang established the Sui Dynasty in 604 A.D.

to enjoy a monopoly of all glory and luxury. He was a man of great stature who would rather share pleasures with all the people under his rule.

Only so great a ruler could have been able to pass unhurt through the gruesome scene of the veritable pandemonium enacted in front of the imperial palace. Moreover, it was undoubtedly his authoritative command that exorcised the nightly hauntings of the spirit of the late Minister of the Left⁴ to his mansion, the gardens of which were a famed imitation of the picturesque scenery of Shiogama.⁵ Indeed, he had such great influence that all the people of Kyoto,* young and old, respected him as highly as if he were a Buddha incarnate.

Once on his way home from a plum-blossom exhibit at the Imperial court, one of the bulls pulling his cart broke away and injured an old man who happened to be passing by. It is rumored that even in such an accident the old man, clasping his hands together in reverence, expressed his gratitude for having been knocked over by the Grand Lord's bull.

Thus his life was full of memorable anecdotes

⁴ "The Minister of the Left" was, next to the Premier, the highest Minister of State along with the Minister of the Right.

⁵ "Shiogama" is a picturesque fishing village in the north-east of Japan.

* The "o" is underscored in the original Japanese use of proper names, but has been omitted in the translation.

which might well be handed down to posterity. At a certain Imperial banquet he made a gift of thirty white horses. Once when the construction works of the main bridge was snagged, he made a human pillar of his favorite boy attendant to propitiate the wrath of the god. Years ago he had a Chinese priest, who had introduced the medical art of a celebrated Chinese physician, lance a carbuncle on his hip. It is impossible to enumerate all such anecdotes. But of all these anecdotes, none inspires one with such overpowering horror as the history of the hell screen which is now among the Lord's family treasures. Even the Grand Lord, whose presence of mind had never been shaken, seemed to have been extraordinarily shocked. Furthermore, his attendants were all frightened out of their wits. Having served him for more than twenty years, I had never witnessed such a terrifying spectacle.

But before telling you the story, I have to tell you about Yoshihide who made a ghostly painting of Hell on the screen.

II

Now as for Yoshihide, some people still remember him. He was such a celebrated master of painting that no contemporary could equal him. When, what I am going to relate happened, he must have been well past his fifty year milestone. He was

stunted in growth, and was a sinister-looking old man, all skin and bones. When he came to the Grand Lord's mansion, he would often wear a clove-dyed hunting suit and soft head-gear. He was extremely mean in nature, and his noticeably red lips, unusually youthful for his age, reminded one of an uncanny animal-like mind. Some said, that he had got his red lips because of his habit of licking his paintbrush; although I doubt if this were true. Some slanderous people said that he was like a monkey in appearance and behavior, and nicknamed him "*Saruhide*" (monkey hide).

This Saruhide had an only daughter, who was fifteen years old, and was serving as a lady's maid at the Grand Lord's mansion. Quite unlike her father, she was a charming girl and of extraordinary beauty. Having lost her mother in her very early years, she was precocious, and moreover, intelligent and observant beyond her age. Thus she won the good graces of her ladyship, and was a favorite with the attendants.

About that time, a tame monkey was presented to the Lord from the Province of Tanba, west of Tokyo. The Lord's young son, who was at his most mischievous age, nicknamed the animal "*Yoshihide*."

This name so much the more added to the ridiculousness of the funny animal that everyone in the mansion laughed at him. If that had been all, all

would have fared well with him. But as it was, whenever the monkey climbed up the pine-tree in the garden or soiled the mat of the Little Lord's room, indeed, whatever it did, they shouted his name and teased him.

One day Yoshihide's daughter, Yuzuki, was passing along the long corridor, carrying in her hand a spray of pink winter plum blossoms, with a note attached to it, when she saw the monkey running toward her from beyond the sliding door. He seemed injured and had no desire to climb up the pillar with his usual agility. In all likelihood he had sprained one of his legs. Then whom should she see, but the Little Lord running after him swinging a switch in his hand, shouting, "Stop tangerine thief! Stop! Stop!" At the sight of this, she hesitated a moment. Just then the monkey, came running over, and giving a cry, clung to the bottom of her skirt. Suddenly, she could no longer find it in her heart to restrain her pity. Holding the spray of plum-blossom in one hand, she swung open the sleeve of her mauve-colored robe with the other, and gently took up the monkey.

"I beg your pardon, my lord," she said, in a sweet voice, making a respectful bow before the Little Lord. "He is only a beast, please pardon him, my lord."

"Why do you protect him?" Looking displeased,

the Little Lord stamped his feet two or three times. "The monkey is a tangerine thief, I tell you."

"He is only a beast, my lord," she repeated.

Then with an innocent but sad smile, she made so bold as to say, "To hear the word Yoshihide called out, I am cut to the quick, as if my father were chastised." At this remark, naughty child that he was, he gave in.

"I see," the Little Lord said reluctantly. "Since you plead for your father's sake, I'll give him a special pardon."

Then throwing away his switch, he turned and went back toward the sliding door through which he had come.

III

From that time on the girl and the monkey became very good friends. She tied a beautiful crimson ribbon around the animal's neck, and also hung from it a little gold bell which the princess had given her. The animal on his part would on no account leave her presence. Once when the girl was laid up with a slight cold, the little monkey sat at her bedside, and with apparent concern, he watched over her, gnawing on his nails.

After this time, strange as it might sound, no one would tease the little monkey as they used to. On the contrary, they all took to petting him. At last even the Little Lord himself came to toss him

a persimmon or a chestnut. Once when he caught a knight in the very act of kicking the animal, he is said to have been extremely incensed. This news reaching his ears, the Lord is said to have given gracious orders that the girl should be brought before his presence with the little monkey in her arms. With reference to this incident, he must also have heard how it was that she had come to make a pet of the animal.

"You are a good and dutiful daughter. I am well pleased with your conduct," the Lord said, and presented her with a scarlet robe as a reward. The monkey, mimicking her deferential obeisance in expressing her gratitude, raised the robe to his forehead, to the immense amusement and pleasure of the Lord. It should be recalled that the Lord took the girl into his good graces because he had been impressed with her filial piety which led her to make a pet of the monkey, and not because he was an admirer of the charms of the gentle sex, as rumor had it. There were some justifiable grounds for the rumor, but about these subjects I may have the opportunity of talking further later when I find more time. Now let me limit my description to saying that the Lord was not a personage to fall in love with such a lowly girl as a painter's daughter, no matter how charming she was.

Highly honored, the girl withdrew from the

Lord's presence. Being a naturally wise and intelligent girl, she did nothing to incur the jealousy of her gossipy fellow maids. On the contrary, this honor won their favor and popularity for both herself and the monkey. She was, above all, received into such particular favor by the princess that she was hardly ever found away from the latter's presence and she never failed to share the latter's company in her excursion carriage.

Now setting aside the girl for the time being, let me tell you about her father, Yoshihide. Although the monkey, Yoshihide, came to be loved by everyone, the painter, Yoshihide, was as much hated by everyone as before, and continued to be called "Saruhide" behind his back.

The Abbot of Yokawa hated Yoshihide as if he were a devil. At the mere mention of his name, he would turn black with anger and abhorrence. Some say that this was because Yoshihide painted a caricature depicting the Abbot's conduct. However, this was a mere rumor current among the common people and may have had no foundation in fact. Anyhow, he was unpopular with everybody who knew him. If there were any who did not speak ill of him, they were only two or three of his fellow painters or those who knew his paintings but knew nothing of his character.

Really he was not only mean to look at, but he had such shocking habits that they made him a

repellent nuisance to all people. For this he had no one but himself to blame.

IV

Now let me mention his objectionable habits. He was stingy, harsh, shameless, lazy, and avaricious. And worst of all, he was so haughty and arrogant that "his being the greatest painter in the whole of Japan" was hanging from the tip of his nose. If his arrogance had been limited to painting, he would not have been so objectionable. Moreover, he was so conceited that he had a profound contempt for all customs and practices in life.

Here is an episode about him told by a man who had been under his apprenticeship for many years. One day a famous medium in the mansion of a certain lord fell into a trance under the curse of a spirit, and she delivered a horrible oracle. Turning a deaf ear to the oracle, he made a careful sketch of her ghastly face with a brush and ink which he found at hand. In his eyes, the curse by an evil spirit may have been nothing more than a jack-in-the-box for children.

This being his nature, he would in picturing a heavenly maiden, paint the fact of a harlot, and in picturing the god of fire, the figure of a villain. He committed many such sacrilegious acts. When he was brought to task, he declared with provoking

indifference, "It's ridiculous for you to say that the gods and Buddhas I have painted should ever be able to punish their painter." This so amazed all his apprentices that many of them took leave of him immediately in fearful anticipation of terrible consequences. After all, he was arrogance incarnate who thought himself the greatest man under the sun.

Accordingly, one can understand how highly he esteemed himself as a painter. However, his brushwork and colorings were so completely different from those of other painters that many of his contemporaries who were on bad terms with him, would speak of him as a charlatan. They claimed that famous paintings by "Kawanari,"⁶ "Kanaoka,"⁶ and other master artists of the past have graceful episodes attached to them. Rumor has it that you can almost smell the delicate fragrance of the plum blossoms on moonlight nights and almost hear the courtier on the screen playing his flute. But all paintings by Yoshihide have the reputation of being unpleasant and uncanny. For example, take his painting representing the five phases of the transmigration of souls which he had painted on the gate of the Ryugai * Temple. If you pass

⁶ Both "Kawanari" and "Kanaoka" are celebrated Japanese painters of the tenth century.

* The "u" is underscored in the original Japanese use of proper names, but has been omitted in the translation.

under the gate late at night, you can almost hear the sighing and sobbing of the celestial maidens. Some say they even smelled the offensive odor of the rotting bodies. The Grand Lord's court ladies, whose likenesses Yoshihide painted at the Lord's command, all fell ill as if their souls had left them and died within three years. Those who disparage his paintings say that all this is because they are works of his black art.

Yet, as I told you, he was an extremely cross-grained crank, and was boastful of his very perversity. Once when the Grand Lord said to him, "You seem to have a strong partiality for the ugly," he replied, with a grin on his red lips, "Yes, my Lord, unaccomplished artists can't perceive beauty in the ugly." Admitting that he was the greatest painter in the whole country, how could he ever have been so presumptuous as to make such a haughty remark in the presence of the Grand Lord. His apprentices secretly nicknamed him "Chira-Eiju" to slander his arrogance. "Chira-Eiju" is, I presume you know, a vainglorious long-nosed goblin that flew over to Japan in olden times.

However, Yoshihide, who was a perverse scoundrel beyond description, had one tender side showing that he was not altogether lacking in the milk of human kindness.

V

He loved his only daughter, who was a lady-in-waiting with a love bordering on madness. She was a girl of very sweet disposition, and devoted to her father. On the part of Yoshihide, incredible as it may sound, he doted on his daughter to the point of infatuation, and would lavish money upon her kimono, hairpins, and what not for her adornment, although he never contributed his tithes or mites to any Buddhist temple.

But all his love for his daughter was blind, and wild. He never gave a thought to finding her a good husband. On the contrary, if anyone had attempted to make any advances to her, he would have had no scruples in hiring street rascals to waylay him. Even when she was summoned to be a chambermaid at the gracious command of the Grand Lord, he was so displeased that he looked as sour as vinegar even when he was brought before the very presence of the Grand Lord. The rumor that the Grand Lord, enamored of the girl's beauty, summoned her to his service in the face of her father's strong disapproval, may probably have originated in the imagination of those who were acquainted with such circumstances.

Rumor aside, so much is certain that Yoshihide, out of his indulgent love for his daughter, had an irresistible desire that she should be released from

her service. Once when at the Grand Lord's command he painted a picture of a cherub, he accomplished a masterpiece by making a life-sketch of the latter's favorite page.

Highly gratified, the Grand Lord said to the painter, "Yoshihide, I am pleased to grant any request of yours."

"If it pleases your lordship," Yoshihide was audacious enough to say, "Allow me to request that my daughter be released from your service."

Apart from other households, whoever else under the sun could ever have made such a presumptuous request of the Grand Lord of Horikawa with regard to the favorite lady-in-waiting, no matter how dearly he may have loved her? With an air of some displeasure, the magnanimous Grand Lord remained silent for a while, staring Yoshihide hard in the face.

"No, I can't grant that," he spat out and left abruptly. There may have been some four or five such occasions. Now it seemed to me that each time his Lordship looked at Yoshihide with less favor and with growing coldness in his eyes. This must have caused his daughter to worry over her father. When she retired to her room, she was often found sobbing, biting the sleeve of her kimono. Thereafter rumor spread all the more that the Grand Lord was enamored of the girl. Some say that the whole history of the hell-screen may be traced to

her refusal to comply with the Grand Lord's wishes. However, I do not believe that this could have been true.

It seems in our eyes that his Lordship did not allow the girl to be dismissed from his service, because he took pity on her family circumstances and had graciously considered to keep her in his mansion and let her live in ease and comfort rather than to send her back to her cross, obstinate father. Undoubtedly he had made a "favorite" of such a charming sweet-tempered girl. However, it is a far-fetched distortion of the fact to attribute all this to the amorous motives of his Lordship. No, I dare say that it is an entirely unfounded lie.

Be that as it may, it was at the time when his Lordship came to look upon Yoshihide with considerable disfavor that he summoned him to his mansion and commanded him to paint on a screen a picture of Hell.

VI

The hell screen was a consummate work of art, presenting before our eyes the vivid and graphic portrayal of the terrible scenes of Hell.

First of all in its design, his painting of Hell was quite different from those of other artists. In a corner of the first leaf of the screen on a reduced scale were painted the ten Kings of Hell and their households while all the rest consisted of terrible

flames of fire roaring and eddying around and around the Mountain of Swords and the Forest of Lances, which, too, seemed ready to blaze up and melt away into flames. Accordingly, except for the yellow and blue patches of the Chinese-designed costume of the infernal officials, wherever one might look, all was in blazing flames, black smoke swirling around and sparks shooting up like burning gold dust fanned in a holocaust of fire.

This brushwork alone was sufficient to startle the human eye. The criminals writhing in agony amidst the consuming Hell fire were not like those represented in ordinary pictures of Hell. For here in the portrayal of sinners was set forth, a whole array of people in all walks of life from nobles and dignitaries to beggars and outcasts; courtiers in dignified court dress, coquettish wives of knights in elaborate costumes, priests praying over the rosaries hanging from their necks, samurai students on high wooden clogs, girls in gaudy gala dress, fortune-tellers clad in the robes of Shinto priests—there were an endless number of them. Therein people of all descriptions, tortured by bull-headed hellbounds amidst blazing flames and raging smoke, were fleeing in all directions like so many autumn leaves scattered by a blast of wind. There were women apparently looking like shrine mediums, with their hair caught in forks and their limbs drawn in and bent like spider's legs. There were

men evidently looking like governors, suspended upside down with their hearts pierced with halberds. Some were being flogged with iron rods. Some were being crushed under living rocks. Some were being pecked by weird birds and others were having their throats torn out by poisonous dragons. There were so many varieties of torture suffered by sinners in numerous categories.

The most outstanding of all the horrors, however, was an ox-carriage falling in mid-air grazing the tops of the sword trees that had branches pointed like animals' fangs, through which heaps of bodies of dead souls were spitted. In this carriage, with its bamboo blinds blown upward by the blast of Hell, a court lady as gorgeously dressed as an empress or a princess was writhing in agony, her black hair streaming amidst flames and her white neck bent upward. This figure of the agonizing court lady in the ox-carriage consumed by flames was the utmost in ghostly representation of the thousand and one tortures in the burning Hell. The multifarious horrors in the whole picture were focussed on this one character. It was a master work of such divine inspiration that no one could have looked at her without hearing in his ears the agonizing outcries of the condemned souls in pandemonium.

It was for this reason, indeed, his consuming desire to paint this picture, that the terrible incident occurred. If it had not been for this event,

how could even Yoshihide have succeeded in painting that graphic picture of the tortures and agonies in Hell? So he could complete the picture, his life had to come to a miserable end. Indeed, it was to this very Hell in his picture, that Yoshihide, the greatest painter in Japan, had condemned himself.

I am afraid that in my hurry to tell you about this strange hell screen, I have reversed the order of my story. Now my story will return to Yoshihide who was commanded to paint a picture of Hell by the Grand Lord.

VII

For five or six months after that Yoshihide devoted himself to painting the picture on the screen without making even a single courtesy call at the mansion. Isn't it strange that, with all his indulgent love for his daughter, once he took to painting a picture, he had even no thought of seeing her. To borrow the words of his apprentices, he became like a man possessed of a fox. The rumor current at that time had it that he had been able to gain fame and reputation because he offered vows to Reynard the god of Good Fortune.

"For positive proof," some said, "steal a look at him when he is at work, and you can see the shady spirits of foxes thronging all around him."

Once he took up his brush, he forgot everything but his work. Night and day he confined himself

to his studio, hardly coming out during daylight. His absorption in his work was most extraordinary when he was painting the hell screen.

Shut up in his studio with the shutters always drawn, he would mix his secret colors, and dressing up his apprentices in various gala costumes or in simple clothes, he would paint them with great care.

But these singular oddities were usual with him. It would not have taken the hell screen to drive him to such extreme eccentricities. While he was working on the painting of his "Five Phases of the Transmigration of Souls," he once came across rotting corpses in a street. Then calmly sitting down in front of the malodorous corpses, from which ordinary painters would have turned their eyes aside, he made accurate sketches, at his ease, of the rotting faces and limbs, exact to a single hair. I am afraid that what I have told you does not convey to you a clear idea of his extreme absorption. I cannot, at this time, tell you the particulars, but I will tell you some of the notable instances.

Once one of his boy apprentices had been mixing colors when he said abruptly, "Now I want to have a rest. For some days I've had some bad dreams."

"Indeed, sir?" the apprentice answered formally without interrupting his work. This was not unusual with his master.

"By the way," the artist said, making a rather modest request, "I want you to sit at my bedside while I'm resting."

"All right, sir," the apprentice replied, as he expected that it would be no trouble at all, although he thought it strange that his master should worry over his bad dreams.

"Come along with me into my inner room. Even if any other apprentice should come, don't let him come in," the master ordered hesitatingly, still looking worried. His inner room meant his studio.

On that occasion, as usual, his studio was closely shut up, dim lights burning as if it were night. Around the sides of the room was set up the screen, on which only the rough sketch was done in charcoal. Entering there, the artist went to sleep calmly as if he were dead tired. But he had not been asleep half an hour when an indescribably weird voice came to the apprentice's ears.

VIII

At first it was only a voice. But presently it turned gradually into disconnected words groaned out like a drowning man under water. "What? Do you tell me to come? . . . Where to? . . . Come where to? . . . Who is it that says, 'Come to Hell. Come to the burning Hell.' Whoever is this? Who could it be but . . .?"

The apprentice forgot about mixing colors,

and took a furtive look at his master's face. The wrinkled face had turned pale, oozing large drops of perspiration. His mouth was wide open as if gasping for breath, with his sparse teeth showing between dry lips. The thing, moving briskly in his mouth as if pulled by a string or a wire, was his tongue. Disconnected words, of course, came out of his mouth. "H'm, it's you. I expected it might be you . . . Have you come to meet me? . . . So, come. Come to Hell. In Hell my daughter is waiting for me."

The apprentice was petrified with fear, a chill running all over his whole frame, as his eyes seemed to catch sight of an obscure, weird phantom coming down close by the screen. He put his hand on Yoshihide at once, and with all his might tried to shake him out of the clutch of the nightmare. But, in a trance, his master continued to talk to himself and would not wake up. So the apprentice was bold enough to splash the water in the palette on to his master's face.

"I'll be waiting for you, so come by this carriage . . . Take this carriage to Hell." These words, strangled in his throat, had scarcely come out in the form of a groan when Yoshihide sprang up all of a sudden as though he had been stuck with a needle. The evil spirits in his nightmare must still have been hanging heavily upon his eyelids. For a moment he stared into space with his mouth still

wide open. Then returning to himself, he ordered curtly, "It's all right now. Go away, will you?"

If the apprentice had made any expostulation, he would surely have been sharply rebuked. So he hurriedly left his master's room. When he came out into the genial outdoor sunshine, he felt relieved as if he had awakened from his own nightmare.

But that was not the worst. A month later another apprentice was called into his studio. Yoshihide, who had been biting his brush, turned on him and said, "I must ask you to strip yourself bare." As the artist had given this kind of order once in a while, the apprentice immediately took off his clothes.

"I haven't seen anyone bound in chains and so, I'm sorry, but will you do as I tell you for a while?" Yoshihide said coldly, with a very strange frown on his face, without any air of being sorry for him. The apprentice was by nature a young man of such burly physique that he could have wielded a sword more adroitly than a brush. Nevertheless, he was astonished beyond measure, and in his later reference to the occasion, he repeatedly remarked, "Then I was afraid that the master had gone mad and that he was going to kill me." Yoshihide felt impatient at his hesitation. Producing iron chains from somewhere, he sprang on his back, and peremptorily wrenching his arms, he bound them

tightly. Then he gave a sudden pull at one end of the chain with such cruel force that the apprentice was thrown plump on the floor by the sudden impact of the strong pull and the unendurable grip of the chain.

IX

The apprentice at that time looked just like a wine keg rolled over on its side. All his limbs were so cruelly bent and twisted that he could move nothing but his head. The arrest of the circulation of his blood under the tension of the chain turned the color of his skin, his face, chest and limbs livid in no time. However, Yoshihide, gave no heed to his pain in the least, and walking about his chained body he made many sketches. It is quite needless to tell you what dreadful torture the apprentice suffered under the tight bondage.

If nothing had happened at the moment, his sufferings might have continued. Fortunately—it might rather be more appropriate to say unfortunately—after a while, a slender strip of something flowed gleaming up to the tip of the nose of the apprentice, who, overcome with fright, drew in his breath and screamed, “A snake! A snake!”

The apprentice told me that he had felt as if all the blood in his body would freeze at once. The snake was actually on the point of touching with its cold tongue the flesh of his neck into which

the chain was biting. At this unexpected occurrence, the cold-blooded Yoshihide must have been startled. Hurriedly casting away his brush, he bent down, and catching the snake by the tail, he dangled it head downward. Suspended, the snake lifted its head and coiled itself around its own body, but could not reach Yoshihide's hand.

“Go to hell, you damned snake! You've marred a good stroke.” In exasperation, Yoshihide dropped the snake into the jar in the corner of the room, and reluctantly undid the chain that bound the apprentice's body. But he did nothing more than to unchain the poor apprentice without even offering a single word of apology or sympathy. For him, his failure in that one stroke must have been a matter of greater regret than to have his apprentice bitten by the snake. Later I was told that he kept the snake for the express purpose of making sketches of it.

To hear of these episodes, you will be able to form a good idea of Yoshihide's mad and sinister absorption. In conclusion let me tell you another story of how a thirteen to fourteen year old apprentice met with such a dreadful experience that it nearly cost him his life during the painting of the Hell Screen. He was a fair-complexioned boy with a girlish face. One night he happened to be called to Yoshihide's room, when in the lamplight he saw

his master feeding a strange bird a piece of raw meat which lay in the palm of his hand. The bird was the size of a house cat. It had big, round, amber-colored eyes and ear-shaped feathers jutting out from both sides of its head, and looked extraordinarily like a cat.

X

Yoshihide by nature hated any external interference in whatever he did. As was the case with the snake which he did not let his apprentices know what he planned to do. Sometimes on his desk were placed human skulls, and at other times silver bowls or lacquered tableware. The surprising things he set out on his desk varied according to what he was painting. Nobody could ever find out where he kept these things. For one thing, such circumstances must have lent force to the rumor widely afloat at that time that he was under the divine protection of the Great Goddess of Fortune. So when the apprentice caught sight of the strange creature, he thought that it must also be one of the models for his picture of Hell on the screen, and asked, "What do you wish, sir?" bowing respectfully before his master.

"Look, how tame it is!" the painter said, licking his red lips, as if he had not heard the question.

"What's the name of this creature, sir? I've

never seen one like this." With these words, the apprentice stared at the cat-like bird with ears sticking out as if it were something sinister.

"What? Never seen anything like this? That's the trouble with town-bred folks. They ought to know better. It's a bird called a horned owl. A huntsman from Kurama⁷ gave it to me a few days ago. I assure you there aren't many as tame as this."

So saying, he slowly raised his hand and stroked the feathers on the back of the horned owl which had just eaten up the feed. Just at that moment the bird, with a shrill menacing screech, suddenly flew up from the desk, and with the talons of both feet outstretched pounced upon the apprentice. At that instant had he not raised his sleeve and hid his face in it, he would have been badly wounded. Screaming in fright, he tried frantically to drive away the horned owl. But the big bird, taking advantage of his unguarded moments, continued to click its beak and peck at him. The boy, forgetting the presence of his master, had to run up and down the room in confusion, standing up to defend himself, and sitting down to drive it away. The bird followed him closely and during unguarded moments would dart at his eyes. The fierce flapping of its wings brought on some mysterious effects, like the smell of fallen leaves, the spray of a water-

⁷ "Kurama" is a village in the suburbs of Kyoto.

fall, or the odor of soured monkey-wine.⁸ The apprentice felt so helpless that the dim oil light looked like a misty moonlight, and his master's very room an ominous, ghastly valley in the depths of the remote mountains.

However, it was not only the horned owl's attacks that overwhelmed the apprentice with terror. What sent the horror of despair into his heart was the sight of Yoshihide. All this while his master had been coolly watching this tragic uproar and had been leisurely sketching, on a piece of paper which he had deliberately unrolled, this ghastly scene of the girlish boy tortured and disfigured by the sinister bird. When the poor boy out of the corner of his eye caught sight of what his master was doing, a shudder of deathly horror ran through his whole frame, and he expected every moment that he was going to be killed by him.

XI

As a matter of fact, it was possible that his master might have planned to kill him, for he deliberately called the apprentice that night to carry out his diabolical scheme to set the horned owl on the handsome boy and paint him running about in terror. So the instant the boy saw what his master's design was, he involuntarily hid his face in both

⁸ "Monkey-wine" is a wine produced by the natural fermentation of grapes collected by monkeys.

his sleeves, and after a wild, indescribable scream, he collapsed at the foot of the sliding-door in the corner of the room. Just at that moment, something tumbled down with a loud crash. Then all of a sudden the horned owl's flapping of its wings became more violent than ever, and Yoshihide, giving a startled outcry, seemed to have risen to his feet. Terrified out of his wits, the apprentice raised his head to see what was the matter. The room had turned pitch dark, and out of the darkness his master's harsh irritated voice calling for his apprentice fell upon his ears.

Presently there was a distant response by one of his apprentices, who hurriedly came in with a light. The sooty light showed that the rush-light stand had been knocked down and that a pool of the spilt oil had formed on the mats, where the horned owl was found tossing about in pain, flapping only one of its wings. Yoshihide, half raising himself, mumbled something understandable to no mortals—and with good reason. A black snake had coiled itself tightly around the body of the horned owl from its neck to one of its wings. This fierce fight had started, presumably because the apprentice overturned the jar as he suddenly crouched, and the cocky horned owl tried to clutch and peck at the snake which had slid out. The two apprentices, exchanging glances in open-mouthed amazement, had been watching this thrilling battle for a while

before they bowed humbly to their master and crept out of the room. No one knows what became of the horned owl and the snake after that.

There were many other instances of this kind. As I told you before, it was at the beginning of fall that he was ordered by the Grand Lord to paint the picture of Hell on the screen. From then on to the end of the winter, the apprentices were under constant danger from their master's mysterious behavior. Toward the end of the winter Yoshihide came to some deadlock in his work on the screen. He became gloomier than ever and noticeably harsher in speech. He could make no progress in the rough sketch, of which he had completed eighty percent. He appeared so dissatisfied that he might not have hesitated even to blot out the rough sketch.

No one could tell what the trouble was, with the picture on the screen. Neither did anyone care to find out. The apprentices, who had learned at their bitter cost by past experience, took all possible means to keep away from their master as though they felt that they were in the same cage with a tiger or a wolf.

XII

Accordingly, for the time being there had been no occurrence worthy of a special mention. All that deserves some notice is that Yoshihide, the obsti-

nate old man, somehow became so strangely maudlin that he was sometimes found weeping when there was no one near. One day when one of the apprentices went out into the garden, he found his master, with his eyes full of tears, looking vacantly into the sky which indicated that spring was not a long while off. More ashamed and embarrassed than his master, the apprentice crept away from his presence without saying a word. Is it not strange that a stout-hearted old man who took up roadside corpses as models for his sketches should weep like a child because he could not find a suitable subject to paint on the screen?

While Yoshihide was so totally absorbed in painting the picture on the screen somehow or other his daughter gradually became so gloomy that it became evident to us that she was trying to hold back her tears. As she was a modest fair-complexioned girl with a quiet composed face, she looked all the more lonely and disconsolate, with her tearful eyes overshadowed by her heavy eyelashes. At first various guesses were made, such as "She is always absorbed in her thoughts, missing her father and mother," "She is love-sick," and so on. However, in the course of time the rumor began to spread that the Grand Lord was trying to force his desire on her. From that time on, the people stopped talking about the girl as if they had completely forgotten about her affair.

It was just about this time that late one night I was passing by the corridor alone when suddenly the monkey Yoshihide came bounding up to me and persistently pulled me by the hem of my skirt. If I remember rightly, it was a mild night bathed in such mellow moonlight as one might have felt was laden with the fragrance of sweet plum blossoms. In the moonlight I could see the monkey baring his white teeth, with wrinkles on the tip of his nose, and screaming wildly as if it had gone mad. I felt thirty percent uncanny and seventy percent angry, and at first I wanted to give him a kick and pass by. But on reflection, I thought of the instance of the "samurai" who had incurred the displeasure of the young Lord by chastising the monkey. However, the monkey's behavior suggested that something out of the ordinary might have happened. So I walked aimlessly for a dozen yards toward the direction in which he pulled me.

I took a turn around the corridor and came as far as the side, which opened up, through the graceful branches of the pine tree, a fine vista of the broad expanse of the pond sparkling like crystals in the night. Then my ears were arrested by the sounds of a confused fight in the room near by. All around it was as still as a graveyard, and in a faint light that was half moonlight and half haze, nothing was to be heard but the splashing of the fish. Instinctively I stopped and went stealthily up

to the outside of the sliding-doors ready to deal them a blow if they proved to be rioters.

XIII

The monkey Yoshihide must have been impatient of my actions. Whining as pitifully as if his neck were being strangled, he scampered around my legs a couple of times and then suddenly bounded up on my shoulders. Instinctively turned I my head aside to dodge being clawed, while the monkey clung to the sleeve of my robe so as not to slip down. On the spur of the moment, I involuntarily staggered back a few steps and bumped against the sliding-door. Then I had not a moment to hesitate. I abruptly threw open the door and was about to rush on into the inner part of the room outside the reach of the moonlight. Then to my alarm, my sight was barred by a young woman who came dashing out of the room as if projected by a spring. In her impetuosity she very nearly bumped into me and tumbled down outside the room. I could not tell why, but she knelt down there and looked up into my face, out of breath, shuddering all over as if she were still seeing something frightful.

I need not take the trouble to tell you that she was Yoshihide's daughter. But that night she looked so extraordinarily attractive that her image was indelibly branded upon my eyes as if she were a

changed being. Her eyes were sparkling brightly, her cheeks in a rosy glow. Her dishevelled skirt and undergarment added to her youthful bloom and irresistible charm quite unlike the innocent girl that she was. Was this really the painter's daughter who was so delicate and modest in every way? Supporting myself against the door, I watched the beautiful girl in the moonlight. Then suddenly aware of the flurried footsteps of a man receding into the dark, as if I could point him out, I asked, "Who is it?"

The girl, biting her lips, only shook her head silently. She appeared to feel deep chagrin.

So stooping down, I put my mouth to her ear and asked, "Who was it?" in a low voice. But still she shook her head again and made no answer. With the tips of her eyelashes full of tears, she was biting her lips harder than ever.

On account of my inborn stupidity, I can understand nothing but what is as clear as day. So not knowing what to say, I remained rooted to the spot, as if I were intent on listening to the thumping of the girl's heart. For one thing, I could not find it in my heart to question her any more.

I don't know how long I waited thus. However, shutting the door which I had left open, I looked back toward the girl who seemed to have recovered a little from her agitation, and as gently as possible said to her, "Now go back to your room."

Troubled with an uneasiness of mind for having seen something which I should not have, and feeling ashamed—of whom I did not know—I began to walk back to where I had come from. But I had not walked ten steps before someone behind me timidly pulled me by the hem of my skirt. In surprise, I looked back. Who do you think it was?

It was the monkey Yoshihide, repeatedly bowing his head to express his gratitude with his hands on the ground like a man, his gold bell tinkling.

XIV

One day two weeks later Yoshihide the painter presented himself at the Grand Lord's mansion and begged his personal audience. The Lord, to whom access was ordinarily difficult, was pleased to grant him an audience, and ordered him to be immediately brought before his presence, probably because the painter was in the Lord's good graces, although he was a man of humble station. The painter, as usual, was wearing a yellow robe and soft head gear. Wearing a more sullen look than usual, he respectfully prostrated himself in the Lord's presence. By and by raising his head, he said in a hoarse voice.

"May it please your Lordship if I tell you about the picture of Hell on the screen which you were previously pleased to order me to paint. I have

applied myself to the painting night and day, and have very nearly completed the work."

"Congratulations! I am pleased to hear it." However, the Grand Lord's voice was lacking in conviction.

"No, my Lord. Congratulations are not in order," Yoshihide said, lowering his voice, as if he were plagued with dissatisfaction. "It is mostly finished, but there is one thing I am unable to paint."

"What! Is there anything you can't paint?"

"Yes, my Lord. As a rule, I can't paint anything but what I have seen. Otherwise, however hard I try, I can't paint to my satisfaction. This amounts to the same thing as my being unable to paint it."

"Now that you are to paint Hell, you mean you must see it, eh?" A scornful smile crept across the Grand Lord's face.

"You are right, my Lord. A few years ago when there was a big fire, I could see with my own eyes a burning hell of raging flames. That was why I could paint the picture of the God of Twisting Flames. Your Lordship is also acquainted with that picture."

"How about criminals? You haven't yet seen prisoners, have you?" The Grand Lord followed with question upon question as if he had not heard what Yoshihide said.

"I have seen men bound in iron chains. I have made detailed sketches of those tormented by ominous birds. Nor would I say that I am not acquainted with criminals under tortures, and prisoners . . ." Here Yoshihide gave an uncanny grin. "Asleep or awake, they have appeared in my eyes ever so often. Almost every night and day bull-headed demons, horse-headed demons, or three-faced six-armed demons harrow and torment me, clapping their noiseless hands and opening their voiceless mouths. They are not those which I am neither anxious nor able to paint."

Yoshihide's words must have been a great surprise to the Grand Lord. After fixing his irritated glare into Yoshihide's face for a while, the Lord spat out, "Then what is it you can't paint?" with a disdainful look, knitting his eyebrows.

XV

"I am anxious to paint a nobleman's magnificent carriage falling in mid-air in the very center of the screen," Yoshihide said, and then for the first time fixed his sharp look full on the Lord's face.

I had once heard that when speaking about pictures, the fellow would become as though insane. Certainly there was some such frightful look in his eyes when he spoke out.

"Allow me to describe the carriage," the painter went on. "In this vehicle, an elegant court lady,

amidst raging flames, writhes in the agony of pain, with her black hair hanging loose about her shoulders. Choked with a heavy black smoke, her face is turned up toward the roof of the carriage, with her brow tightly drawn. Around the carriage a score or more of ominous birds fly about, clicking their beaks . . . Oh, how can I ever paint such a court lady in the burning carriage?"

"Hm . . . and what? . . ." Strangely enough, the Grand Lord urged Yoshihide to go on with his talk as if he were well pleased.

"Oh, I can't paint it," Yoshihide said once again in a dreary tone, his feverish red lips trembling. But suddenly he changed his attitude, and in dead earnest, made a bold and feverish request in a spirited and snappish tone, "Please, my Lord, burn a nobleman's carriage before my eyes, and if possible, . . ."

The Grand Lord darkened his face for an instant but suddenly burst into a peal of laughter.

"All your wishes shall be granted," the Grand Lord declared, his voice half choked with his laughter. "Don't take the trouble to inquire about the possibility."

His words struck horror into my heart. It may have been my presentiment. Anyway the Grand Lord's behavior on that occasion was most extraordinary, as though it had been infected with Yoshihide's madness. White froth was gathering at the

corner of his mouth, and his eyebrows twitched violently.

“Yes, I will burn up a nobleman’s carriage.” As he paused, his incessant heavy laughter went on. “A charming woman dressed up like a court lady shall ride in the carriage. Writhing amidst the deadly flames and black smoke, the lady in the carriage will die in agony. Your suggestion of finding such a model for your picture does you full credit as the greatest painter in the whole country. I praise you. I praise you highly.”

At the Grand Lord’s words, Yoshihide had turned pale and had been trying to move his lips for perhaps a minute when he put his hands on the matted floor as if all his muscles had relaxed, and said politely, “I am most grateful to you, my Lord,” in a voice so low as to be hardly audible.

This was probably because, with the Grand Lord’s words, the horror of the scheme which he had had in mind vividly flashed across his mind. Only this once in my life did I think of Yoshihide as a pitiful creature.

XVI

One night a few days later, according to his promise, the Grand Lord summoned Yoshihide to witness the burning of a nobleman’s carriage right before his eyes. However, this did not take place on the grounds of the Grand Lord’s mansion of

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Horikawa. It was burned at his villa in the hilly suburbs commonly called the mansion of Yuge (Snow-thaw) where his sister had once lived.

This residence had been uninhabited for a long time, and the spacious gardens had fallen into a state of dilapidation. In those days many uncanny rumors were going around about the late sister of the Grand Lord. Some said that on moonless nights her mysterious scarlet-colored skirts would be seen moving along the corridors without touching the floor. Without doubt, these rumors must have been wild guesses started by those who had seen the complete desertion of the mansion. But there is nothing to wonder at in the circulation of these rumors, for the whole neighborhood was so lonely and desolate even in the daytime that after dark even the murmuring of the water running through the gardens added all the more to the dismal gloom, and the herons flying about in the starlight might naturally have been taken for ominous birds.

On that night it was pitch dark with no moonlight. The rushlights showed that the Grand Lord, dressed in a bright green garment and a dark violet skirt, was seated near the verandah. He was sitting cross-legged on a rush mat hemmed with white brocade. Before and behind him and at the right and left of him, five or six "samurai" stood in respectful attendance upon him. One of them stood out with prominent conspicuousness. A few years

before, during the campaign in the Tohoku District, he had eaten human flesh to allay his hunger. That gave him such herculean strength that he could tear the horn of a live deer apart. Clad in armor, he stood in full dignity beneath the verandah with the tip of his sheathed sword turned upward. The lurid ghastliness of the scene, turning bright and dark under the lights which flickered in the night wind, made me wonder whether I was dreaming or awake.

Presently when a magnificent carriage was drawn up into the garden to make its commanding presence in the dark, with its long shafts placed on its chassis and its gold metalwork and fittings glittering like so many stars, we felt a chill come over us, although it was spring. The interior of the carriage was heavily enclosed with blue blinds, of which the hems were embroidered in relief, so we could not tell what was inside. Around the carriage a number of menials, each with a blazing torch in hand, waited attentively, worrying over the smoke which drifted toward the verandah.

Yoshihide was on his knees on the ground facing the verandah just in front of the Lord. Dressed in a cream-colored garment and soft head-gear, he looked smaller and homelier than usual, as though he had been stunted under the oppressive atmosphere of the starry sky. The man squatting behind him, dressed in a similar garment, was presumably

his apprentice. As they were some way off in the dark, even the colors of their garments were not clearly discernible.

XVII

The time was very near midnight. Darkness, enveloping the grove and stream, seemed to listen silently to the breathing of all those present. Meanwhile the passage of the gentle wind wafted the sooty smell of the torches toward us. The Grand Lord had been silently watching this extraordinary scene for a while when he stepped forward and called sharply, "Yoshihide."

Yoshihide seemed to say something in reply, but what my ears could catch sounded nothing more than a groan.

"Tonight I'm going to set fire to the carriage as you wish," the Grand Lord said, looking askance at his attendants. Then I saw the Grand Lord exchange a significant look with his attendants. But this might have been my fancy. Yoshihide seemed to have raised his head reverently, but did not say anything.

"I say, behold! That's the carriage in which I usually ride. Yoshihide, you know it, don't you? Now according to your wish, I am going to set fire to it and bring to life a blazing hell on earth before your very eyes."

The Lord paused again, and again exchanging

significant looks with his attendants, he proceeded in a displeased tone.

"In the carriage is a woman criminal—bound in chains. If it is fired, I am sure that she will have her flesh roasted and her bones scorched, and that she will writhe in dire agony to death. No better model can you have for the completion of your picture. Don't miss seeing her snow-white skin burned and charred. Watch closely her black hair dance up in the infernal sparks of fire."

The Grand Lord closed his mouth for the third time. I do not know what came to his mind. Then shaking his shoulders in silent laughter, he said, "The sight will be handed down to posterity. I will also watch it here now. There, raise the blinds and let Yoshihide see the woman inside."

At his command, one of the menials, holding aloft a pine torch in one hand, strode up to the carriage, and stretching out his free hand, he quickly raised the blinds. The red blazing light from his torch waved wildly with a crackling noise, and suddenly lightened up the small interior with dazzling brightness, revealing a woman cruelly bound in chains on the seat. Oh, whoever could have mistaken her? Although she was dressed up in a gorgeously embroidered silken "kimono" with a cherry-blossom design, gold hair-pins shining with a brilliant glitter in her hair which hung loose about her shoulders, the fact that she was

Yoshihide's daughter was in unmistakable evidence in her trim, maidenly form, her lovely charming profile of graceful modesty. I very nearly gave an outcry.

At that moment the "samurai" who stood opposite me roused himself and cast a sharp glance at Yoshihide, with his hand on the hilt of his sword. In amazement, I looked toward Yoshihide, who seemed to have been startled out of his wits. Although he had been on his knees, he instantly sprang to his feet, and stretching out his arms, he unconsciously attempted to rush toward the carriage.

However, as he was off in the dark background, I could not discern his face clearly. But that was the matter of a passing moment. For all at once, his face which had turned sheet-white came vividly into view through the intervening shadow of the night, while his body seemed to have been lifted up into space by some invisible power. Just then at the Grand Lord's command, "Set fire!" a shower of torches thrown in by the menials bathed the carriage in a flood of lurid light and set it ablaze in a pillar of raging flames.

XVIII

The fire enveloped the whole chassis in no time. The instant the purple tassels on the roof, fanned by the sudden wind, waved upward, volumes of

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smoke spiraled up against the blackness of the night, and such furious sparks of fire danced up in mid-air that the bamboo blinds, the hangings on both sides, and the metal fittings on the roof, bursting into so many balls of fire, shot up skyward. The bright color of the tongues of the raging fire, which soared up far into the sky, looked like celestial flames spurting out of the orb of heaven which had fallen down to the earth. A moment before I had very nearly cried out, but now I was so completely stunned and dumbfounded with mouth agape I could do nothing but to watch this terrible spectacle in a daze. But as for the father, Yoshihide. . . .

Still now I can remember how the painter Yoshihide looked at that moment. He attempted to rush toward the carriage in spite of himself. But the instant the fire blazed up, he stopped, and with his arms outstretched as if magnetized, he fastened such a sharp gaze upon the burning chassis as to penetrate the raging flames and heavy smoke which had enveloped the whole carriage. In the flood of light that had bathed his whole body, his ugly wrinkled face was brought into clear view even to the tip of his beard.

His wide open eyes, his distorted lips, and the quivering of his cheeks which constantly twitched, all were tangible expressions of the mixture of dread, grief, and bewilderment which crowded

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upon his mind. Neither a robber who was about to be beheaded nor a heinous criminal who was dragged before the judgment seat of Yama could have worn a more painful or agonized face. At the sight of him, even the "samurai" of herculean strength was greatly shocked and respectfully looked up into the Grand Lord's face.

The Grand Lord, however, tightly biting his lips, fixed his gaze upon the carriage, showing a sinister grin from time to time. Inside the carriage—oh, how could I ever have the heart or courage to convey to you a detailed description of the girl in the carriage who flashed into my sight. Her fair, charming face, which, choked with smoke, fell back, and her long alluring hair which came loose while she was trying to shake off the spreading fire, as well as her beautiful, gorgeous "komono" with its cherry-blossom pattern which turned into a lambent flame in no time—what a cruel spectacle all this was! By and by a gust of night wind blew away the smoke toward the other side, and when the sparks of fire shot up like gold dust, she fainted in such convulsive agonies that even the chains which bound her might have burst. Above all others, this atrocious torture of hell itself brought into gruesome reality before our very eyes sent such a blood-curdling shudder through the hearts of all present including the "samurai" that our hair stood on end.

Then once again we thought that the midnight wind had moaned through the tree-tops. The sound of the wind had scarcely passed into the dark sky—no one knew where to—when something black bounded like a ball without either touching the ground or flying through the air, and plunged straight from the roof of the mansion into the furiously blazing carriage. Amidst the burned crimson-lacquered lattice which was crumbling in pieces, it put its hands on the warped shoulders of the girl, and gave, out of the screens of black smoke, a long and piercing shriek of intense grief like the tearing of silk, then again two or three successive screams.

Involuntarily we gave a unanimous outcry of surprise. What was holding fast to the shoulders of the dead girl, with the red curtain of blazing flames behind it, was the monkey, which went by the nickname of Yoshihide at the mansion of Hori-kawa.

XIX

But it was only for a few seconds that the monkey remained in our sight. The instant the sparks shot up like thousands of shooting stars into the night air, the girl together with the monkey sank to the bottom of the whirling black smoke. After that in the midst of the garden, nothing else was to be seen but the carriage of fire blazing up with a ter-

rific noise. A pillar of fire might have been a more appropriate phrase to describe the turbulent, furious flames which shot up into the dark starry sky.

In front of the pillar of fire, Yoshihide stood still, rooted to the ground. What a wonderful transfiguration he had undergone! A mysterious radiance, a kind of blissful ecstasy showed on the wrinkled face of Yoshihide who had been agonized by the tortures of hell until a minute before. His arms were tightly crossed on his chest as if he had forgotten that he was in the presence of the Grand Lord. No longer did his eyes seem to mirror the image of his daughter's agonized death. His eyes seemed to delight beyond measure in the beautiful color of the flame and the form of the woman writhing in her last infernal tortures.

The wonder was not limited to his ecstatic transport with which he was watching the death agony of his beloved daughter. Yoshihide at that moment revealed something that was not human, some such mysterious dignity as King Lion's wrath which you might see in your dreams. It may have been our imagination. But in our eyes, even the flocks of night birds, which, startled by the unexpected fire, screeched and clamored around, seemed to fly shy of the soft head-gear of Yoshihide. Even the eyes of the soulless birds seemed to be aware of a mysterious dignity which shone over his head like a halo.

Even the birds appeared like that. Much more did we quake within, with bated breath, watching Yoshihide closely and intently, our hearts overwhelmed with such awe and reverence as if we looked up to a newly made Buddhist image at its unveiling ceremony. The fire and smoke of the carriage which had spread all around with a roaring sound and Yoshihide who stood captivated and petrified there by the spectacle inspired our horror-stricken hearts, for the moment, with a mysterious awe and solemnity beyond all description. However, the Grand Lord, harrowed by the very horror of the scene, appeared pale and livid as though he were a changed being. Foam gathering at his mouth, he gasped like a thirsty animal, grasping the knee of his purple-colored skirt tightly with both hands.

XX

The report of the Grand Lord's burning of the carriage spread far and wide—heaven only knows who started it. The first and foremost question that would naturally arise in your mind would be what led the Grand Lord to burn Yoshihide's daughter to death. A variety of guesses were made about the cause. Most people accepted the rumor that his motive was to carry out his vengeance against his thwarted love. But his real underlying intention must have been his design to chastise and correct

the perversity of Yoshihide who was anxious to paint the screen even if it involved the burning of a magnificent carriage with the sacrifice of human life. That was what I heard from the Grand Lord's mouth.

Since Yoshihide was eager enough to paint the screen even at the very moment he saw his own daughter burned to death before his eyes, some reviled him as a devil in human shape which felt no scruple about sacrificing his parental love for the sake of his art. The Abbot of Yokawa was one of the staunch supporters of this view, and used to say that, no matter how accomplished one might be in any branch of learning or art, one would have to be condemned to hell, if one were not endowed with the five cardinal virtues of Confucius—benevolence, justice, courtesy, wisdom and fidelity.

A month later when his hell screen was completed, Yoshihide took it immediately to the mansion, and presented it with great reverence to the Grand Lord. The Abbot, who happened to be there at the time, had glared angrily at him from the first, showing a wry face. However, as the screen was unrolled, the high priest must have been struck by the truth of the infernal horrors, the storms of fire ranging from the firmament to the abyss of hell.

“Wonderful!” the Abbot exclaimed in spite of himself, giving an involuntary tap on his knee. Still

now I remember how his ejaculation drew a forced smile from the Grand Lord.

From that time on hardly any one, at least in the mansion, spoke ill of the painter, because, strangely enough, no one, including those who harbored the most intense hatred toward Yoshihide, could see the picture on the screen without being struck with its mysterious solemnity or being vividly impressed with its ghastly reality of the exquisite tortures in a burning hell.

However, by that time Yoshihide had already departed this life.

On the night of the day following the completion of his painting of the screen, he hanged himself by putting a rope over the beam of his room. Yoshihide, who survived the untimely death of his only beloved daughter, could no longer find it in his heart to live on in this world.

His body remains buried in the corner of the ruins of his house. However, with the passage of scores of years, wind and rain have worn out the tombstone marking his grave, and overgrowing moss has buried it into oblivion.