

— The Listening Hood —

Once upon a time, there lived a kind old man. One day, on his way home from gathering firewood in the mountains, he happened upon a little fox who was trying with all its might to pick fruit off a tree. However, try as it might, it could not reach the fruit, so the old man picked the fruit for the little fox. This made the little fox so happy that it watched the old man's retreating figure even long after he disappeared into the distance.

On another day, when the old man came home from a visit to town, there was the little fox he encountered previously beckoning to him. The old man followed the little fox, who led him to the little fox's mother. The mother fox thanked the old man for his kindness to her son, and gave the old man a somewhat shabby hood as a token of her gratitude.

The next day, when the old man was chopping firewood in his yard, the hood he received the previous day fell out of his pocket, so he tried it on. As soon as he did so, he found he was able to understand the language of the sparrows. "What a magical hood," the old man said, and wearing the hood, continued to enjoy listening to the conversations of various animals.

Then one day the old man heard two crows perched on a tree talking about the daughter of a rich man in the village who was ill. They said that the daughter's illness was the curse of a camphor tree. The old man therefore visited the rich man's house and asked to be let into the storehouse. Inside the storehouse, the old man heard the camphor trees outside talking among themselves, and learned from their conversation that the curse was because the rich man's storehouse was standing on the stump of one of the camphor trees.

The following day, the old man conveyed what he heard to the rich man, and had him move the storehouse. Then, miraculously, the rich man's daughter recovered fully from her illness. Rejoicing over his daughter's recovery, the rich man gave the old man many gifts in reward. The old man headed home, buying an armful of deep-fried tofu, which is the favorite food of foxes, along the way.

Medetashi, medetashi.

— 聞き耳頭巾 —

昔々、心のやさしいお爺さんがいました。ある日、お爺さんが山へ柴刈りに行き、家に帰る途中で、ギツネが木の実を取ろうとして一生懸命頑張っているところに通りかかりました。なかなか取れなかったので、お爺さんが代わりに取ってやると、とても嬉しそうにして、いつまでもお爺さんの後ろ姿を見送っていました。

ある日、お爺さんが町まで出かけて帰ってくると、先日のギツネが手招きしています。ついて行ってみると、お母さんギツネのところに案内されました。お母さんギツネは、息子がお世話になったお礼にと、なにやら汚らしい頭巾をくれました。

翌日お爺さんが庭で薪割りをしていると、昨日もらった頭巾が懐から落ちたので、試しにそれをかぶってみると、なんとスズメたちが話している内容がわかります。「これは不思議な頭巾だ」。おじいさんは、頭巾をかぶって、いろいろな動物の話聞いて楽しんでいました。

そんなある日、木の上で2羽のカラスが、村の長者(大金持ち)の娘さんの病気について話しているのが聞こえてきました。なんでも、娘さんの病気は楠の祟りによるもののだとか。そこでお爺さんは長者の家を訪ね蔵に入れてもらおうと、外で楠が話している声が聞こえてきます。それによると、楠が祟っているのは、長者の蔵が、楠の腰の上に建っているからだということがわかりました。

翌日お爺さんは、そのことを長者に伝えて、早速その蔵を動かすと、娘はすっかり元気になりました。喜んだ長者はお爺さんにたくさんの褒美をくれました。お爺さんはギツネの好きな油揚げをどっさり買って帰りました。

めでたし、めでたし。

