

THE CRAB

(Kani Yamabushi)

Translation copyright 2014 by Don Kenny

kyogen-in-english.com

Warrior Priest -- (Shite)

Porter -- (Ado)

Crab -- (Koado)

WARRIOR PRIEST: (Singing.)

Descending Mounts Omine and Kazuraki,

Descending Mounts Omine and Kazuraki,

I return to my own mountain home.

STAGE ASSISTANT: (Singing.)

My mountain home.

WARRIOR PRIEST: (Speaking.) I am a Warrior Priest from Mount Haguro in the Land of Dewa. I have completed my ascetic training on the sacred Mounts Omine and Kazuraki, and am now heading toward home. Hey, hey, Porter, are you there?

PORTER: Here.

WARRIOR PRIEST: Are you there?

PORTER: Here.

WARRIOR PRIEST: There you are.

PORTER: At your service, Sir.

WARRIOR PRIEST: Is it not a matter of great joy that I have completed such severe ascetic self-mortification without mishap?

PORTER: As you have so astutely observed, Sir, nothing could be the source of greater joy than the fact that you have completed your ascetic self-mortification without mishap.

WARRIOR PRIEST: Then we must set out toward home. Come, come! Let's be on our way.

PORTER: With all my heart.

WARRIOR PRIEST: Just what do you think? The life of a Warrior Priest is one of great penance, of sleeping in the fields and on mountains, with only rocks and trees to pillow his head. And this strict ascetic self-mortification, this spirit of self-sacrifice, endows us with such great and wonderful powers that we can instantly pray any bird that happens to fly overhead to the ground.

PORTER: As you have astutely observed, no words can describe the greatness of the occult powers you have achieved.

WARRIOR PRIEST: Tell me, now, what do people say of me?

PORTER: They say you are a living manifestation of the immovable Acala.

WARRIOR PRIEST: That is not bad at all. As you well know, in terms of occult powers, I consider myself equal to one and all. Thus being known as a living manifestation of the immovable Acala is only natural. And if I am indeed a living manifestation of the immovable Acala, since you are my follower, you protect me both left and right as both guards Kimkara and Cetaka.

PORTER: I am most grateful to be able to serve under your efficacious shadow.

WARRIOR PRIEST: Tell me now, when we left home, who was it who come out to see you off?

PORTER: Of whom could you be speaking?

WARRIOR PRIEST: There was a woman who came out to see you off.

PORTER: Oh, that was my aunt.

WARRIOR PRIEST: Different from you, she was a find looking woman. When we return home, tell her to come visit me from time to time.

PORTER: As you say, Sir.

WARRIOR PRIEST: Come, come. Let's be on our way.

PORTER: With all my heart.

WARRIOR PRIEST: Now we have entered deep into the mountains.

PORTER: Suddenly I hear a loud rumbling.

WARRIOR PRIEST: Something or other has been rumbling and roaring with great force for some time. What do you think it might be?

PORTER: Just what might it be, Sir?

WARRIOR PRIEST: It might be the wind in the pines or a mountain torrent.

PORTER: Or do you think it might be thunder?

WARRIOR PRIEST: Suddenly it sounds very close.

PORTER: Everything has gone dark.

WARRIOR PRIEST: This is likely no small matter.

PORTER: This is indeed unsettling.

WARRIOR PRIEST: Look! Something is coming this way, something is coming!

PORTER: Oh, how frightful!

WARRIOR PRIEST: Go see what it is.

PORTER: I am must to frightened. You go, Sir.

WARRIOR PRIEST: Hey, you rascal! Is it not for occasions like this that I bring you with me? Hurry up and go see what it is!

PORTER: How can you say such a thing? At times like this it is the role of a Warrior Priest to step forward. So you must go, Sir.

WARRIOR PRIEST: (To the CRAB who comes on walking sidewise, with his arms waving back and forth in the air like up-side-down pendulums to look like pincers.) Hey, you rascal! Who are you who stands blocking the way of the progress of this holy Warrior Priest?

CRAB: I am the spirit of one whose eyes are in the sky; whose shell touches not the earth; who has two large and eight small legs; and who passes through the world from left to right.

WARRIOR PRIEST: Porter! Porter! Now I see that that creature is the spirit of a crab.

PORTER: What made you come to that conclusion?

WARRIOR PRIEST: Did you not hear what it just said? To begin with, saying his eyes are in the sky means that they stick out upward.

PORTER: Truly, they stick out upward.

WARRIOR PRIEST: Saying his shell touches not the earth means that it floats in the air.

PORTER: I see.

WARRIOR PRIEST: Saying he has two large legs means his two pincers, and saying he has eight small legs means that he has eight of those legs that wiggle about.

PORTER: Truly, he has eight of them.

WARRIOR PRIEST: Saying that he is one who passes through the world from left to right means that like a crab he always moves only sidewise to the left or to the right. Thus without a doubt he is indeed a crab.

PORTER: Then you mean you have determined that it is for certain that he is a crab?

WARRIOR PRIEST: Most certainly.

PORTER: Well, I must say, what a hateful rascal. He is most rude for a crab. I know what I will do.

WARRIOR PRIEST: Here, here! What are you doing?

PORTER: Just leaving it all up to me.

WARRIOR PRIEST: Don't do anything foolish.

PORTER: Hey, you are a hateful rascal! Being no more than a crab, what do you mean by standing blocking the way of the progress of this holy Warrior Priest? In recompense for your impudence, I will break your shell to bits with this sacred pilgrim's staff. (As the PORTER goes to strike the CRAB, the CRAB grabs a hold of the PORTER's ear with one of his claws.) Ow, ouch! Ow, ouch!

WARRIOR PRIEST: What happened, what happened?

PORTER: He grabbed my ear.

WARRIOR PRIEST: It is no more than you deserve. I said to leave him be but you would not listen. Here, here. I'll get you loose. (When the WARRIOR PRIEST tries to pull the PORTER loose, the CRAB only pinches the PORTER's ear tighter.) Ow, ouch. Ow, ouch. When you do that, he pinches even harder.

WARRIOR PRIEST: Well, I must say, how pitiful your plight is. I say, my occult powers gained from years and months of ascetic training are for time just such as this. I will pray a prayer and it will get you loose.

PORTER: Oh, please do it quickly, Sir.

WARRIOR PRIEST: With all my heart. (Beginning his incantation.) Know that a Warrior Priest is indeed a Warrior Priest. Did you hear that?

PORTER: I did hear you.

WARRIOR PRIEST: This headpiece I wear is made of one foot of pure black cloth, wound round and round, (Raising his left arm.) and on the head, (Bending his elbow to point to his headpiece.) popped in place. Worn in this manner, it is indeed a headpiece. Is it not a thing of wonder?

PORTER: It is indeed a thing of wonder.

WARRIOR PRIEST: (Holding his prayer beads out in front of himself.) Square-wrought prayer bead these are not, but plain wood chunks strung on a string. Calling them square-wrought prayer beads, (Grasping his prayer beads in both hands.) all I need do is pray by Acala, the august deity of fire, (Moving toward the CRAB.) and some wonder will surely appear. (Rubbing his prayer beads together and chanting.) Boron, boron! Boron, boron! Boron, boron!

PORTER: Ow, ouch! Ow, ouch! I say, I say, please stop praying!

WARRIOR PRIEST: And why should I do that?

PORTER: The sound of your prayer beads makes him pinch even harder.

WARRIOR PRIEST: What's that? You say he pinches even harder?

PORTER: He does indeed, Sir.

WARRIOR PRIEST: Well, I must say, how pitiful your plight is. In that case, I will invoke the sign of the crow and make him let you loose.

PORTER: I beg you to do that.

WARRIOR PRIEST: No matter how deep the evil in the heart of this crab may be, all I need do is invoke the sign of the crow and pray, A, B, C, D, E, F, G, and then, H, I, J, K, L, M, N. (Rubbing his prayer beads together and chanting.) Boron, boron! Boron, boron!

PORTER: Ow, ouch! Ow, ouch!

(Finally the WARRIOR PRIEST gets to close to the CRAB and the CRAB grabs the WARRIOR PRIEST's ear with his other claw.)

WARRIOR PRIEST: Ow, ouch! Ow, ouch!

BOTH: Ow, ouch! Ow, ouch!

WARRIOR PRIEST: Well, he let us go.

PORTER: Truly, he let us go.

WARRIOR PRIEST: You catch him now.

PORTER: You hurry and catch him, Sir.

BOTH: (Chasing off after the CRAB.) We'll catch you yet, we'll catch you yet! We'll catch you yet, we'll catch you yet!