

**Fox Trapping
(Tsurigitsune)**

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**Fox
Hunter**

FOX (Singing.)

**All farewells are over now for this ancient fox,
All farewells are over now for this ancient fox,
Now I am left alone with sad tears of regret.**

(Speaking.) I am an ancient fox of more than one hundred years and I reside in this neighborhood. There is a man nearby who began trapping foxes some time ago and became so fond of trapping us that he has succeeded in trapping all my family, friends, and relatives, and now he is after me as well. But as I constantly exercise the greatest of care in all I do, I have, thus far, escaped unscathed. Now this man has an uncle, a priest named Hakuzosu, and he follows this uncle's advice on everything. Thus I have decided to disguise myself as his uncle Hakuzosu and advise him to give up trapping. It is for this reason that I have disguised myself in this manner. (He reaches the edge of a pond and spends some time looking at his reflection in the surface of the water from every possible angle to make sure that his disguise is complete.) I must hurry on my way to his dwelling. (Singing as he goes.)

**From the home I love,
From the old mound where I live, I venture forth,
From the old mound where I live, I venture forth,
Allowing my feet to lead me where'er they will,
Allowing my feet to lead me where'er they will,
Thus do I find myself at the hunter's dwelling**

(Speaking.) Traveling with urgency, now I find myself here at his dwelling place. Everybody has some good point, and this hunter's is

that he keeps no dogs. It is for this reason that I am able to visit him without undue fear. (Suddenly pricking up his ears.) But in spite of the fact that he does not keep dogs, I hear one barking now. (He darts frantically about, trying to determine where the barking dog is.) No, no. It seems the dog is not nearby. First I will announce myself. Hello in there! Is anybody home?

HUNTER Someone is at the door. Who is there? Oh, Hakuzosu. Since it is you, there was no reason for you to call out at the door. You should have come right on in. But what brings you here at such a late hour?

FOX Oh, it is just that, just that. Today I have come for a special reason, and that is why I called out at the door.

HUNTER Just what sort of thing might it be?

FOX I have heard that you trap foxes. Is this true?

HUNTER You ask me of a thing of which I know nothing. I have never trapped a fox in my life.

FOX No, no. You must not hide it. Everybody who comes to visit the temple says to me, "Are you not aware that your nephew is an incessant trapper of foxes? Why do you not advise him against it?" So do not hide it, just tell me the truth.

HUNTER So is it true that you have heard such a thing?

FOX I have indeed heard such a thing.

HUNTER As you know already, there is no way I can hide it from you. Once I happened to trap a fox, and since then I found it so entertaining that I trapped a second, a third, a fourth, and finally a fifth fox.

FOX There, you see. There is not the slightest falsehood in what people told me. And what do you do with the foxes you have trapped?

HUNTER I do nothing specially worth the telling. First, I skin them and make leather loincloths.

FOX Hoi! (Beginning to tremble, and continuing with increasing violence during the ensuing explanation.)

HUNTER I cook their flesh and eat it.

FOX Aagh!

HUNTER I char their bones and sell them as healing plasters.

FOX Just hearing you speak of all this makes me tremble. The thing known as a fox forms frightfully tenacious attachments. Also, the practice of killing is so very sinful that the Buddha placed it first among the five admonitions. Thus be assured, be surely assured, that you must abandon trapping entirely.

HUNTER I just went on trapping, entirely ignorant of such matters. From this moment forward, I will abandon trapping.

FOX What's that? You say you'll abandon trapping?

HUNTER That I will.

FOX If that is the case, I know an ancient tale about the frightfully tenacious attachments of the fox. I will tell it to you. But if perchance you do not truly intend to abandon trapping, there is no use telling it to you.

HUNTER By all means, I have indeed made up my mind to abandon trapping entirely. Thus I do indeed beg you to tell me your ancient

tale.

FOX If that is the case, as I have traveled far today, first give me a stool to sit on.

HUNTER As you say, Sir. (He fetches the stool.) Here is your stool.

FOX (He sits on the stool.) I will tell you the tale now, and you must listen well.

HUNTER As you say, Sir.

FOX (Chanting.) Long, long ago, the thing known as a fox was a deity. In far off India, it was known as the Prince of Distant Seas, in China as the Prince of February, and in Japan as the Great and Gracious Deity of the Five Inari Shrines. All of these are foxes.

HUNTER Haaa.

FOX There is a tale of an imperial lady-in-waiting named Lady Tamamo. Her grace and beauty were so great that they shone forth from all four corners and eight directions. It was because she was so thoroughly beautiful as a jewel that she was given the name Tamamo that means 'algae jewel.' She was also known as Lady Specter, for in the second year of the reign of Emperor Ichijo, after the imperial poem contest, during the ensuing orchestra concert, the great Eiso Tempest sent violent winds sweeping through the palace, extinguishing all lights without exception. At that instant, Lady Tamamo sent golden rays of light out from her body, illuminating the entire jeweled palace. After witnessing this phenomenon, Emperor Ichijo insisted that Lady Tamamo was not a human being, but a specter in disguise, so he called her Lady Specter ever after. Not long after this, the Emperor fell ill. The imperial diviner Abe no Yasunari came forth to scatter his diving sticks named One Virtue, Six Evils, Two Duties, Three Lives, and Eight Difficulties. He drew out the one called Six Evils and divined

that it was all the work of this Lady Tamamo. He went on to explain that Lady Tamamo was in actual fact a fox who had already, during the Tcheou Dynasty in China, disguised herself as Emperor Yu's consort Empress Baosi, in which form she took the lives of as many as seven emperors. Now, she had come to Japan to take the life of Emperor Ichijo. He warned that such a serious situation could not be resolved satisfactorily without the help of prayers. Thus he brought together all priests of fame and rank and had them offer all the prayers they knew, but all in vain. Then it was decided that altars of four and five tiers should be decorated and the incantation of the Yakushi Buddha should be made. At the instant the incantation was intoned, the fox found it quite impossible to remain any longer in the palace. It fled to the Nasu Plain in the Land of Shimotsuke. Word of this spread throughout the land, and all agreed that the matter must not be neglected as it was. Thus, as the dog has an appearance similar to the fox, a dog hunt was ordered in order to conquer the fox. Two men named Suke, one of Miura and the other of Kazusa, were commissioned to take charge, and they both accepted the challenge. They went forth with all their vassals and retainers in attendance for a one hundred day dog hunt. And on the hundredth day, a fox appeared that measured seven fathoms from tail to head. Suke of Miura shot the first arrow and Suke of Kazusa the second, both hitting squarely on the mark. Raising their voices in a shout of victory, they leaped off their horses, drew their swords, and finished off the fox. As soon as their deed was reported to the emperor, his malady was instantly cured, order was restored to the land, and a reign of peace ensued. But the tenacious attachment of the fox remained. It congealed itself into a giant rock and took the lives of countless people, even casting dead to the ground wild beasts that ran by it and birds that flew over it. Thus its deadly fame spread far and wide and it was named the Killing Stone. Then came a priest named Geno. He faced the rock and spoke to it pleading, "You spirit that inhabit this stone known as the Killing Stone! Go back now from whence you came!" So saying, Geno struck the rock three times with his staff, and it split right down the middle. But even so, the tenacious attachment of the fox remained within it and continued to

take people's lives. This is how frightful the tenacious attachment of the fox is. Thus from this day forward, you must indeed make up your mind to abandon fox trapping entirely.

HUNTER I say, I say. What a frightful tale you have told me. Up to this time, I just went about blithely trapping foxes, entirely ignorant of the frightfully tenacious attachment of which you speak. The tale you just told me has moved me to determine that from this moment forward, I will abandon trapping entirely, so set your heart at ease.

FOX What's that? You say you will abandon trapping entirely?

HUNTER Yes.

FOX If that is the case, you have a thing with which foxes are trapped called a tr. . . tr. . . trap. You must throw it away too.

HUNTER I will throw it away after you leave for home.

FOX Even though you may claim you will, I am certain when you look at your trapping tools, a desire to trap foxes will once more well up in your heart. Thus I say, if you truly mean to give up trapping, I admonish you to throw it away in front of my very eyes.

HUNTER As you say, Sir. (Fetching the trap, he suddenly thrusts it in the face of the FOX.) Here it is!

FOX Oh, it smells bloody, how it smells of blood! What do you mean thrusting such a bloody smelling thing under the nose of a priest? Throw it away quickly.

HUNTER Ha.

FOX Throw it away quickly

HUNTER As you say, Sir. (He throws it on the ground.) There, I have

thrown it away.

FOX **What's that? You say you've thrown it away?**

HUNTER **That I have.**

FOX **Oh, how happy, how happy I am. It makes me very satisfied that you have complied with what I said. I would very much like to go inside and see your children too, but today is inauspicious. I will come and see them another day. And you must come visit me at the temple too. If you come to see me, though, as I am but a poor priest, I have nothing special to serve you, but I will give you a bit of sea tangle flavored with a little pepper, and a cup of fine tea.**

HUNTER **For that, I would be most grateful.**

FOX **As I am but a poor priest, I have nothing special to serve you, but I will give you a bit of sea tangle flavored with pepper. . .**

HUNTER **Haaa. . .**

FOX **And a cup of tea.**

HUNTER **Thank you so much for coming.**

FOX **And you must come visit me at the temple too. If you come to see me, though, as I am but a poor priest, I have nothing special to serve you, but I will give you a bit of sea tangle flavored with a little pepper, and a cup of fine tea. (He sets out, and the HUNTER watches him go for a time, and then leaves the scene.) Sea tangle flavored with pepper, and a cup of tea. . . Sea tangle flavored with pepper, and a cup of tea. . . Sea tangle flavored with pepper, and a cup of tea. . . (Now at a safe distance from the HUNTER's place, the FOX relaxes a bit.) Oh, how happy, how happy I am. I completely succeeded in making him abandon trapping entirely. From this time forth, no matter what land or which direction I may visit, there is no need for**

me to worry in the very least. As I have such great peace of heart, I will sing about it as I make my way back to my ancient mound home. (Singing.)

**If I were to reside in this village,
It would be a great scandal,
So off I now go,
Back to my ancient mound home,
So lithely, so gracefully.**

(He bumps into the trap that lies in the middle of the road where the HUNTER threw it away.) Hoi! Oh, how frightful, how very frightful! When he said he had thrown his trap away, I thought he had thrown it far away, but he threw it away in the very road that leads to my home. Oh, how deep is the doubt in the heart of the hunter! Hmmm. There is some sort of black thing on it. I have never before had a look at this thing they call a trap. Today is such a happy day that I think I'll just go near and get a good look at this trap. Hey, you! You little black thing! (Poking at the bait on the trap with his cane.) So it is you what have trapped all my friends and relatives, huh? (Beating the bait on the trap repeatedly.) Ei, ei, ei! (Bringing the lower end of his cane to his nose and sniffing it.) Kun, kun, kun. Oh, it is no wonder that all the young ones got themselves trapped, for that hunter baits his trap with the very best quality fried young rat. How can I leave this rat uneaten? I will leap on it and down it in a single bite! (He goes toward the trap once more, but stops just before he leaps.) Oh, no, no! Why should I let myself get trapped when I can see that this is what has already trapped so many before me? I must leave this place. I must go straight back to my ancient mound. (He moves quickly away, but stops suddenly after a few steps and sniffs the air.) Kun, kun, kun. Oh, I really think I should leave this place, but it seems I cannot make myself leave after smelling that fragrance. Also, now that I think of it, that bait itself is the enemy of all my friends and relatives. And all theyoung ones got themselves caught because they did not know that they should simply snatch off the bait and eat it. To eat the bait itself, all one must do is leap upon it. . . (Going toward the bait, he suddenly feels the weight of his disguise and draws back.) I'm sure it would be that easy, but dressed in robes

that are heavy as pond scum, I am so weighted down that I cannot leap on it lithely. Oh, how I want to eat it. (Going toward the trap once more, he strikes the bait with his cane again.) Hey, you rascal! I will take revenge on you for my friends and relatives as soon as I get out of these heavy robes. I will come right back to grab and eat you! Prepare your heart for that and stay right where you are! (Beating the bait several more times.) Ei, ei, ei. What a bloody smell! (Turning away from the trap, he raises the skirt of his robe to reveal his tail, and slowly starts away.) I can only serve tea. . . (Moving off quickly while barking like a fox.) Wai, wai, wai, wai, wai!

HUNTER (Returning to the scene.) My uncle Hakuzosu has just been to visit me. He said he heard about my trapping foxes, and he admonished me against it in far severer terms than it is his custom to use. He even made me throw away my trap. But it all seemed so very strange, I left it half set when I threw it away. I think I will just go see what state my trap is in now. (Setting out.) Truly, the whole thing was very strange. He has never before come visiting at twilight, nor is he one to speak with such persistence. And on top of all this, as I watched him go, he seemed to suddenly disappear into thin air. In any case, I cannot make this thing out. (He arrives at the trap.) Here, here! What is this? (Picking the trap up and looking it over carefully.) My trap has been poked at and trampled on. This does not look at all like the work of a man. It looks like what a fox would do. Oh, I see now. The Hakuzosu who came to visit was none other than that old fox I have been hunting these many days. Well, I must say, how very vexing! I was sure that there was something strange about him. What a vexing thing this is! What shall I do now? (He thinks.) Oh, I know! As he has poked at the bait like this, I am sure he will come back for it. So I will set my trap with care, lie in wait for him, and trap that rascal before the night is out for sure. (Setting the trap.) The thing known as a fox is such a sly creature that one never knows what they will turn themselves into next or when. He was indeed well disguised. He was exactly like Hakuzosu in every way. No matter who one might show him to, there would most likely be no one who would say it was not him. The more I think

of it, the more vexed it makes me. If I had had the slightest inkling that that rascal was a fox, what need would I have had for my trap, for I would have been able to catch him with my bare hands. How I do regret it now. In any case, I will set my trap with the greatest care and take him for sure this time. There were things that seemed most strange when he was here, and I thought to myself that I should gram him and question him closely. But I was afraid of the consequences in case he was truly my uncle Hakuzosu, so I decided to be discreet and let him go. The more I think about it, the more I think that there has never been anything so maddening. (He has completed the setting of his trap.) Well now, I have set my trap quite well. It is ready for him. I am sure I will trap him this time. (He checks the position of the trap, looking up and down the road.) Truly, this is the path he always takes, so I am sure this is just right. Now I will hide myself in the shade of this pine tree and wait for that old fox to come back. (He crouches down, holding on to the end of the rope attached to the trap. The FOX comes on as himself, darts here and there on all fours, stops to bark and howl from time to time, rolls over to scratch his back, approaches the trap and tries to get up enough courage to grasp the bait a number of time, and finally jumps on the bait and gets caught in the trap's snare. The HUNTER jumps to his feet and tries to reel the FOX in with the rope, lashing out at him all the while with a bamboo whip.) There! You're caught. It was good of you to come! You really had me deceived before. You deceived me then, but you won't slip through my fingers now! (The FOX struggles in vain, and folds his paws in a pleas for release.) No matter how you plead, do you think I will let you go now?! (The FOX finally succeeds in getting his head out of the snare and runs away yelping in glee. The rebound makes the HUNTER fall over backwards.) Oh, he got out of the snare and is running away! (Getting to his feet.) Oh, how angry I am! Isn't there anybody about?! Somebody catch that old fox for me! (Chasing out after the FOX.) I'll catch you yet, I'll catch you yet. I'll catch you yet, I'll catch you yet. I'll catch you yet, I'll catch you yet.

