

Wrapping Up Coolness

(Ohiyashi)

Translation copyright 2014 by Don Kenny
kyogen-in-english.com

Taro Kaja (shite) TK
Master (ado) M

M I am a resident of this neighborhood. These days it is quite unusually hot, so today I have decided to go someplace to cool off. I will call my servant Taro Kaja and confer with him about where it would be best to go. Taro Kaja, are you there?

TK Here.

M There you are. The matter I have called you here about is of no great import. These days the heat is so particularly intense that I have decided to go someplace to cool off. What do you think?

TK If you had not suggested it, I was about to propose it myself. That is a fine idea.

M If that is the case, where should we go?

TK Where would be best, I wonder?

M Just where would be best?

TK Rather than haggling over this place or that place, let us go to somewhere in the vicinity of Higashiyama.

M Just where in Higashiyama would be best?

TK Let us go to Kiyomizu and worship at the shrine while we cool off. And there we can cool off beneath the waterfall.

M That is a fine idea. If the is the case, come, come, let us be on our way.

TK As you say, Sir.

M Tell me now, just what do you think? While it is that time of year, do you not agree that it is particularly hot this year?

TK It is as you say indeed. I do not remember a year when it was as hot as it is this year.

M Well, here we are at Kiyomizu already.

TK It is as you say indeed.

M Shall we start by worshiping at the shrine, or shall we go down to the waterfall to cool off first?

TK Well, I think it would be best to begin by going down to the waterfall and washing our hands, and then go up to the main sanctuary.

M That is indeed best. Come, come, let us be on our way.

TK With all my heart.

M Now just what do you think? Not only is it refreshing just to go outside, but it is much cooler than inside the house.

TK It is as you say indeed, Sir. Gazing upon the greenery of trees and plants makes one forget the heat.

M Here, now, we have arrived at the waterfall. Well, well, I must say, what grandly flowing waterfall.

TK It is truly an unstained flow.

M Go over there and wrap up some coolness.

TK What is that you say?

M Oh, I just said that you must go and wrap up some coolness from that waterfall.

TK You said I must go and wrap up some coolness from that waterfall?

M That I did indeed.

TK If you want some water, you should simply say that I should go and draw some water. To say wrap up coolness. . . (He laughs.)

M That is just because you know nothing about it. All the elegant ladies of the imperial court say “wrap up coolness.” They would never say such a thing as “draw water.” So you must learn to say it that way from now on.

TK It may well be that all the elegant ladies and young gentlemen of the court say “wrap up coolness,” but to hear your big mouth say “wrap up coolness”! . . . (He laughs.)

M Well, I must say what execrable things you say. In any case, it is a good thing to learn to speak in a delicate manner.

TK You just keep jabbering on in the same vein. I know a tale about such matters. I will recite it for you. (He recites in a narrative manner.) In days long past, during the time of the retired Emperor Toba, there was a man named Sato Bei Norikiyo. He became weary of the transient world, so took the tonsure and adopted the name of Priest Saigyo. This Saigyo traveled through the length and breadth of the land as a form of ascetic training. And when he arrived at the Post-town of Samegai in the Land of Omi, in the middle of the Waterless Month (June), in order to eat some parched barley flour, he took out a portion from under his rain poncho, and at the same instant, a strong wind from the river struck and scattered it from his hands. So he composed the following poem, “My parched barley flour was enticed away by the wind, ordering me to drink nothing but the water of Samegai today.” This was the poem that he composed, and there is, after all, no mention of “wrapping up coolness.”

M Wait right there for a minute. What is this? I let myself be drawn into an argument with Taro Kaja and now I find myself in a bind. I wonder what I should do? Oh, I know what I’ll do. Here, here, I have a poem in which the phrase “wrap up coolness” is used. I will sing it for you.

TK I will listen.

M (Singing.) The wicket gate squeaks as I push it open, and intending to offer some coolness to the guardian deity of my domain as a prayer for protection at the shrine of bows and arrows, from near the pure water boulder. . . “ (He suddenly puts his hands to his mouth to stop himself from singing any further.)

TK That is a very fine poem. I will continue on from where you left off. So the following part goes, (Singing.) “From near the pure water boulder, I receive the flow, drawing water from the Hojo River.”

M You should let your master win at least once in a while.