

Flask or Jug?
(Tsutsu Sasae)

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Dove Deity
Brewer from Yamato
Brewer from Kochi

YAMATO I am a resident of the Land of Yamato, where I make my living brewing and selling wine. I am a devotee of the Hachiman Shrine. As my business prospers increasingly with each passing year, I go there every year to offer a flask of my wine at the time of the annual festival. And this year as always, I intend to make the pilgrimage. Truly, while each and every year I succeed in making good wine, I am particularly pleased with the result this year. Never has there ever been such happy circumstance. And this is all thanks to the beneficence of the Hachiman Shrine. Well, now that I have come this far, I find that I am quite exhausted. I think I will rest here for awhile and wait for someone to come along with whom I can continue my journey.

KOCHI I am a resident of the Land of Kochi, where I make my living brewing and selling wine. I am a devotee of the Hachiman Shrine. As my business prospers increasingly with each passing year, I go there every year to offer a jug of my wine at the time of the annual festival. And this year as always, I intend to make the pilgrimage. Truly, it seems that my prayers at the Hachiman Shrine have been answered, for my prosperity increases with each passing year, and my gratitude increases in equal proportion.

YAMATO Here comes a likely looking person. I will speak to him. Here, here. I say, I say.

KOCHI Is it me to whom you speak?

YAMATO Indeed it is you to whom I speak. Where do you come from and where are you headed?

KOCHI I am on a pilgrimage to the festival at Hachiman Shrine.

YAMATO That is a most happy circumstance, for I am also on a pilgrimage to Hachiman Shrine. Shall we not travel together?

KOCHI I was just saying to myself how nice it would be to have a companion to travel with. Let us indeed travel together.

YAMATO If that is the case, you lead the way.

KOCHI Since you were, after all, here first, you must lead the way.

YAMATO Since you urge me to do so, shall I lead the way?

KOCHI That is a fine idea.

YAMATO Come, come. Follow me.

KOCHI With all my heart.

YAMATO Well, I just happened to speak to you and you immediately agreed to travel with me. Never has there been such a happy circumstance.

KOCHI They say that even the lightest brushing of sleeves between strangers indicates some relationship in a former life. This must be the sort of circumstance that is meant by that saying.

YAMATO Well now, are you simply making a pilgrimage, or do you have something specific to pray for?

KOCHI I am a resident of the Land of Kochi, where I make my living brewing and selling wine. I am a devotee of the Hachiman Shrine. As my business prospers increasingly with each passing year, I go there every year to offer a jug of my wine at the time of the annual festival. And this year as always, I am, just now, on my way there for that same purpose.

YAMATO Well, I must say, we are very similar. I am a resident of the Land of Yamato, where I make my living brewing and selling wine. I am a devotee of the Hachiman Shrine. As my business prospers increasingly with each passing year, I go there every year to offer a flask of my wine at the time of the annual festival.

KOCHI It is almost as though we had planned to meet here. But I cannot conceive of your reason for calling you jug a flask.

YAMATO Oh, but it is simply because this is a thing called a flask, not a jug.

KOCHI But it is called a jug. So I cannot comprehend why you call it a flask.

YAMATO Why, because it is a flask.

KOCHI Oh, no, never! It is a jug.

YAMATO Oh, how strange. I suddenly sense a wondrous fragrance in the air, and I see an unusual figure approaching.

KOCHI Indeed, the atmosphere is altered.

YAMATO First, come over here with me.

KOCHI With all my heart.

DOVE DEITY (Singing.)
Know that the one known
as the Dove Deity
who serves the Hachiman Shrine
is me.

YAMATO Who is this who appears before us now.

DOVE DEITY I am the Dove Deity of a subsidiary sanctuary of Hachiman Shrine. The two of you are known to be faithful devotees who make a pilgrimage to this mount each and every year, and on the way here this year, you fell into a quarrel, causing a disturbance throughout the mountain. Thus I was ordered by my superior deity to come here and appear before you.

YAMATO Well, I must say, how grateful we are!

KOCHI First, come all the way in here. (He brings a stool for the DOVE DEITY to sit on.)

DOVE DEITY Well now, tell me, just what were you quarreling about earlier?

YAMATO This is what it was about: I am a resident of the Land of Yamato, where I make my living brewing and selling wine. Every year, I come here every year to offer a flask of my wine at the time of the annual

festival. And that person there is a resident of the Land of Kochi, where he makes his living brewing and selling wine, and who says he also comes here every year to offer a jug of his wine at the time of the annual festival. I was over our flasks and jugs that we quarreled and made such a disturbance.

DOVE DEITY So you say you were quarreling over flasks and jugs?

YAMATO That is indeed the case.

DOVE DEITY What foolish men you are. A flask and a jug are the self same thing. I have a tale about a bamboo wine vessel that one of you calls a flask and the other calls a jug. I will relate it to you, so listen with great care.

YAMATO & KOCHI With all our hearts.

DOVE DEITY (Speaking in a chanting narrative style.) Long ago, in a part of the capital known as West Mountain Point, there lived a poor couple who were faithful devotees of the Avatar of Matsu-no-O. Every year on the first day of August, they cut a branch from the fine Chinese bamboo that grew in their garden, trimming it down to just one foot and three inches in length, making a flask that they filled with wine and offered it to the Grand Avatar of Matsu-no-O. That night, one year, they received an oracle from that deity lauding them for the depth of their devotion, as demonstrated by the regular and unflinching offering of their bamboo jug of wine; advising them to become brewers of wine; and promising them that if they did so, they would enjoy abundant prosperity that would extend down through the line of their descendents. So in accordance with the oracle, they began to brew wine, after which they amassed ever increasing wealth. Thus it has become the custom up to the present day to offer wine to the Great Avatar of Matsu-no-O on the first day of August every year. Now the sort of bamboo wine vessel in question can be called either flask (tsutsu) or jug (sasae) for they both derive from the same Chinese characters one of which means 'vessel' and the other of which adds 'bamboo,' resulting in two different words for the same thing. Thus it is not a matter that is worth quarreling over, so prepare your hearts for that.

YAMATO It was through complete ignorance of what you tell us that we fell to quarreling. So now that we know, we will never more quarrel.

DOVE DEITY All this talk has made me quite thirsty. You must offer me a cup of the wine you have brought here.

YAMATO As you say, Sir, but will it truly be all right for you to imbibe before the main deity has a cup?

DOVE DEITY I understand your concern, but as I was ordered by my superior deity to appear here before you, I am here as a proxy of Hachiman Shrine. Thus there is no need for your concern, so offer me wine quickly.

YAMATO As you say, Sir. So now I offer you wine from my flask.

KOCHI And I offer you wine from my jug.

DOVE DEITY (Raising his cup and bowing.) To all gods great and small through the length and breadth of all the land. And especially to the Grand Avatar of Matsu-no-O. The Grand and Gracious Avatar of Matsu-no-O. (He lowers his cup and raises his head.) Only after all of these may I, the Dove Deity, imbibe of this sacred wine. (He drinks.)

YAMATO I wish to ask a question.

DOVE DEITY What do you wish to know?

YAMATO I understand your gratitude to all gods great and small throughout the length and breadth of all the land, but why did you make special obeisance to the Grand and Gracious Avatar of Matsu-no-O?

DOVE DEITY Your question is a valid one, but what did you comprehend from the tale I told of the Grand Avatar of Matsu-no-O? As the Grand Avatar of Matsu-no-O is the tutelary deity of wine, so it is only after he has tasted the first sip of new wine that I, the Dove Deity can imbibe to my heart's content.

KOCHI We understand now your august purpose.

DOVE DEITY Well now, on such a felicitous occasion as this, it seems a shame for me to simply disappear. Thus I will sing and dance for you, and after that I will lead you to the sacred mountain, so prepare your hearts for that.

YAMATO & KOCHI With all our hearts.

DOVE DEITY (Singing.)

To the wine vessels,
Whether called flasks or jugs
Of ten thousand ages.
(He dances to instrumental accompaniment,
and then resumes his singing as he continues to dance.)
Oh, I say, what a felicitous thing it is,
What a felicitous thing, I say,
That from the ancient past
Until the present day,
Under both the names of flask and jug,
Since the most ancient of days
Of the eighty-seven hundred million treasures,
All come to offer wine at this sacred mountain,
All come to offer wine on this sacred mountain,
This most ancient Mountain of the Dove.