The Bamboo Princess

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The Bamboo Princess

Randall Snyder
(1997)
Once upon a time there lived an old man... who every day... would trudge up to the fields and mountains to gather bamboo.
It must be that you are meant to be my child."

and carried her back to the hut where he lived...
The child grew quickly...and in just three months...had grown into a woman so beautiful...that the bamboo cutter's house was filled...with an

From that time on...whenever the old man went out to cut bamboo he found a stalk filled with gold...and gradually...became rich.

I Kaguya-hime

The child grew quickly...and in just three months...had grown into a woman so beautiful...that the bamboo cutter's house was filled...with an
After several years... when the child had attained her full height... a priest was summoned to bestow a woman's name on her and she was christened... "Nayotake no KAGUYA-HIME"...

"The Shining Princess of the Young Bamboo"
Narr. 42

On the day of her name-giving... a lavish feast was held...where every man was consumed with desire... for the Bamboo Princess

The most lovesick suitors remained near the hut in the faint hope of seeing her...some even poking holes in the fence to catch a glimpse of her...

Among those who persisted in their courtship...were five celebrated lovers:
Narr.  

Prince Ishitsukuri............ Prince Kuramochi............ The Minister of the Right Abe no Mimuraji........ The Grand Counsellor Otomo no Miyuki........ and the Middle Counsellor Isokami no Marotari

Shak.

Cheng

Vln.  

Vla.  

Vc.  

Pf.  

Narr.  

Shak.

Cheng

Vln.  

Vla.  

Vc.  

Pf.  

A Tempo

They spent their days and nights by the gate of her house... giving up nourishment... languishing...

Slower
through the ice and snow of December... to the blazing heat of July... nor answered their many letters... but the Bamboo Princess... neither spoke to them...
Eventually the Old Man said to the Bamboo Princess: "I am now over seventy years old and do not know whether today or tomorrow may be my last. It is the custom for men and women to marry... why do you not choose one of the five suitors for your husband?" The Bamboo Princess answered: "I will not marry until I am certain he is sincere... If one of them will bring me something I desire... I will marry him. Please tell this to them" "And what is it you desire?" said the Old Man: Kaguya-hime answered: "I would like Prince Ishitsukuri... to bring me the Stone Begging Bowl of the Buddha."
...Prince Kumoschi should go to the mountain in the Eastern Sea and fetch me a branch of a tree that grows there whose roots are silver, whose trunk is gold, and which bears the fruit of white jewels.

...Abe no Mimuraji should bring me a robe made of the fur of Chinese fire-rats.

...Otomo is to bring me the five-colored jewel from a dragon's head.
...and Isonokami should bring me a swallow's cowrie birth-charm.

When the Old Man related the requests of the Bamboo Princess to the five suitors...they left dejected...but determined to find...at any cost...what Kaguya-hime desired.

A Tempo $\frac{d}{=100}$
II The Five Suitors

Prince Ishizukuri, realizing, that even if
he traveled for a million miles... he could never find the Begging Bowl of Buddha

pretended to leave for India... and stayed at a mountain village... where he found
an old begging bowl... black with soot.
After three years... Prince Ishizakuri carried the bowl to Kaguya-hime's home and left with it the following message:

The Bamboo Princess became suspicious when the bowl failed to give off so much as a glimmer of light. "Why did you bring this bowl from the Mountain of Darkness" she said to the Prince.

"Journeying through sea and mountain... I have worn myself out. In quest of this bowl, my tears have flowed."
Realizing his trick had been discovered, he went sorrowfully away.

Prince Kuramochi, also realizing the impossibility of finding the Jewelled Branch of Paradise, attempted, like his rival, Prince Ishitsukri, to win the Bamboo Princess by a ruse.

Pretending to leave for Kyushu in search of the branch...
he secretly left instructions for six of his finest craftsmen... to create a jewelled branch, exactly as Kayuga-hime had described it.

All the revenues of his sixteen provinces... were devoted to the costly project.

Finally... after three years of great hardship, he sent word that he had found the branch and returned to the home of the Bamboo Cutter:
"I am Ayabe no Uchimaru, and for over one thousand days
but you have yet to pay us our wages..."

Hearing these words the Bamboo Princess declared:

"I really thought it came from a tree of paradise...
but it is only a shameful counterfeit..."

and she gave it back to the Prince...

who vanished in disgrace to the distant mountains.

just then a band of six men burst into the house:

"I have brought back the Jewelled Branch of Paradise"

exclaimed Prince Kuramochi......
The Minister of the Right Abe no Mimuji... contracted the famous Chinese merchant, Wang Ching, to search the world for a robe of Chinese Fire-Rats.

Eventually a robe was found... of unsurpassing beauty... as well as being invulnerable to fire. The Minister had the robe placed in an ornate box inlaid with precious stones, along with the following poem:

"I have wept for boundless love... but today I wear with dry sleeves a fur robe which will not burn in fire."
"What a lovely robe it is" said Kaguya-hime, "but I still cannot be sure that it is genuine."

When the Minister was ushered into the room Kaguya-hime said: "I shall believe it is genuine and will marry you...if it survives the test of fire."

The Old Man placed the robe in the fire... and it burned brightly! "Just as I thought!" said the Bamboo Princess, "it was not the right fur."

The Minister...realizing he had been deceived by Wang Ching... left quietly, never to be seen again.
Otomo no Miyuki, the Grand Counselor... summoned together all the members... of his large household:

"Anyone who can get a jewel of five colors from a dragon's head can have whatever they desire"

and gave each enough copper coins... to sustain them during their search.

Realizing the impossibility of finding such a jewel... some went home and enjoyed themselves while others used the money to visit shrines... and other places they'd always wanted to see.
Meanwhile, The Grand Counselor... began building a palace...

Narr.

Shak.

Cheng

Vln.

Vla.

Vc.

Pf.

for the day...
when the Bamboo Princess... would be his wife

After some time... with no word from his servants...
Otomo began to get suspicious...
and ventured forth in great secrecy... disguised...
as a common laborer.
Hearing of many dragons in the sea off Kyushu.... The Grand Counselor hired a boat.... but a terrible storm arose.

"This storm is caused by a dragon's breath!" cried an oarsman....
"Pray once to the gods that we may be saved!"

After three days the storm abated.... and Otomo no Miyuki, the Grand Counsellor.... vowed never to hunt dragons again.
When a swallow is about to give birth, it raises its tail and circles around seven times, and releases a cowrie birth-charm.

in order to seize this magic charm... The Middle Counselor Isonokami no Marotari ordered twenty of his men...

to build perches... from which to watch their nests. the swallows... naturally terrified by all this activity... flew away.

in order to seize this magic charm... The Middle Counselor Isonokami no Marotari ordered twenty of his men...
After Middle Counsellor Isonkami had the nests removed... the swallows returned to build nests... and one dependable man waited in a basket that could be hoisted the moment a swallow gave birth.

After several failed attempts the Middle Counsellor went up himself in the basket...
and just when the swallow lifted its tail... "Bring me down" shouted the victorious Middle Counsellor...

Isonokami quickly reached in and seized something that had fallen out under the tail.

but his men pulled too hard... and the basket... came crashing down... knocking Isonokami unconscious.

Very Slow
Portentous

III The Moon Men

When he regained consciousness... of bird dropping. "Alas, it was all to no avail" he moaned, and try as he could to keep the story secret, soon the whole district was laughing about the great Middle Counsellor's misfortune. And so all five suitors failed, and for a time... The Bamboo Princess... was left in peace.
Finally...after many years...the beauty of the Bamboo Princess... reached the ears of the Emperor... who sent his maid of honor to see her. When Kaguya-hime was asked to see the Imperial Messenger... She replied:

"How can I appear before her... when I am so unattractive...?" "You must see her!" said the Old Man... "It is an order from the Emperor!" "I will not!......." answered Kaguya-hime reluctantly the Maid of Honor told the Emperor, who then summoned the old man......
"Present to me Kaguya-hime", said the Emperor,  
"I have heard reports of her great beauty."

Returning home the Old Man said to the Bamboo Princess:  
"This is a direct command from the Emperor! how can you still be unwilling to serve him?"

"If I obey his command I shall feel ashamed of my former heartlessness to the Five Suitors"  
"I shall report to the Court that you still refuse to serve him" said the Old Man, shaking his head.

"She is not a child born of my body" said the Old Man to the Emperor...  
"but one I found long ago in a bamboo reed... and her ways are not those of ordinary people."

The Emperor said: "How would it be, that under a pretext of an Imperial Hunt, I tried to get a look at her?"  
The Old Man agreed it was an excellent idea... and a date was set for the hunt.
During the course of the hunt, the Emperor entered Kaguya-hime's house and saw her, filling the room with light!

"I shall not let you go" he cried, but just as he was about to reach her, she suddenly vanished!
Now realizing she was no ordinary mortal... and the Bamboo Princess
the Emperor said: "I shall no longer insist
that you come with me... but please...
return to your former appearance....
just one more look at you... and I will go"

and the Bamboo Princess

As the years passed... Kayuha-hime became
more and more pensive...........
and in the spring of the new year... spent hours...
gazing .......... at the full moon
"What troubles you so when you look at the moon?" the Old Man asked.
"I have intended to tell you for a long time now..."
"the world is a happy place"...but kept silent for fear it would hurt you...
"but I can't remain silent anymore:"...I AM NOT A CREATURE OF THIS WORLD....

The Bamboo Princess burst into tears...

NARR. I come...from...the Palace...of the Moon...and visited this world...because...of an obligation...from the past

Now the time has come...for me to return
Narr.  

on the night of the next full moon... people from my country will come for me... and I will have no choice...

It has been the thought of the unhappiness this will cause you......

258

English Cymbal

Shak.

"On the night of the full moon men are coming from heaven to steal the Bamboo Princess...Please send soldiers to stop them!"

"I will not let them take you!", cried the Old Man, and went to the Emperor for help.

Narr.

that has grieved me all this time.*

264
The Emperor posted two thousand men... equipped with bows and arrows... on the roof of the Bamboo Cutter's house.

"Even people from heaven... will be no match for these defenses!"

cried the Old Man

"You will be able to resist them"
you will not be able to shoot your arrows... even your bravest men will be unable to struggle... "I will resist them!"
cried the Old Man
"It pains me that after 20 years... I must leave you...
but it was not fated that I should stay."

Even your bravest men will be unable to struggle...

...the evening passed on into night... and about midnight...

Eerie

I must leave you...
...the area was suddenly illuminated by a light... as bright as ten moons...

...and down from heaven... came men... riding chariots... of clouds!
The soldiers were paralyzed with fear... and those few arrows... that were released... glanced harmlessly in all directions.

One of the moon men addressed the Old Man who, like the rest, cowered with fear: "Kaguya-hime... was sent to this world because of a sin she committed... and now..."
Narr. 202
we have come for her... however much you lament this... you must bring her forth at once! "Kaguya-hime has lived with me for twenty years!" cried the Old Man...

Shak. 302

Cheng 302

Vln. 302

Vla. 302

Vc. 302

Pf. 302

Narr. 207

"please let her stay!" but the Moon Man ignored him... and flew his chariot over the house... and forced all the doors... to swing open...

Shak. 307

Cheng 307

Vln. 307

Vla. 307

Vc. 307

Pf. 307

Rattle 307

pizz. timpani mallet inside
“Kaguya-hime” the Moon Man cried, “Come out...it is time to go home....
take this celestial robe of feathers... and this elixir of immortality...
for you must be in poor health...after your long stay here”

she went to where the old bamboo cutter lay weeping: “It is not by my own will that I go now...

“Please take this Celestial Coat as a memento of me...
and on nights when the full moon appears, gaze at it...and I shall feel
as though I am returning from the sky to those I must now leave behind
and also...give this letter and the Elixir of Immortality to the Emperor.”

at least you can watch me ascend into the sky”
The Bamboo Princess climbed into the Chariot... and, accompanied by a hundred celestial beings... rose into the sky.

Epilog

The Emperor was much distressed... *Although you sent many soldiers to keep me here, escorts have come who will not be denied*

It is to my regret that I could not serve you and have been so troublesome...
...that you surely must have thought my behavior incomprehensible!

...It weighs heavily on my heart that you must have thought my stubborn refusal to obey you an act of disrespect... now...as I am about to depart...I think longingly of my Lord.”

The Emperor refused to eat anything... nor did he permit and entertainment to take place. He summoned his ministers and asked them which mountain was closest to heaven... one man answered:
"There is a mountain in Suruga... which is closest to heaven."
The Emperor wrote the following poem:
"What avails me in this world when I float in a sea of tears, because I will never see her again."
He gave the poem and the Elixir of Immortality to a messenger and ordered these things taken to the summit in Suruga...

...to be set on fire... thus the mountain became known as "Fuji" meaning "never die"...
and even now the smoke can be seen rising up...into the sky.