

THE STONES OF FIVE COLORS AND THE EMPRESS JOKWA

FROM JAPANESE FAIRY TALES



Long, long ago there lived a great Chinese Empress who succeeded her brother the Emperor Fuki. It was the age of giants, and the Empress Jokwa, for that was her name, was twenty-five feet high, nearly as tall as her brother. She was a wonderful woman, and an able ruler. There is an interesting story of how she mended a part of the broken heavens and one of the terrestrial pillars which upheld the sky, both of which were damaged during a rebellion raised by one of King Fuki's subjects.

The rebel's name was Kokai. He was twenty-six feet high. His body was entirely covered with hair, and his face was as black as iron. He was a wizard and a very terrible character indeed. When the Emperor Fuki died, Kokai was bitten with the ambition to be Emperor of China, but his plan failed, and Jokwa, the dead Emperor's sister, mounted the throne. Kokai was so angry at being thwarted in his desire that he raised a revolt. His first act was to employ the Water Devil, who caused a great flood to rush over the country. This swamped the poor people out of their homes, and when the Empress Jokwa saw the plight of her subjects, and knew it was Kokai's fault, she declared war against him.

Now Jokwa, the Empress, had two young warriors called Hako and Eiko, and the former she made General of the front forces. Hako was delighted that the Empress's choice should fall on him, and he prepared himself for battle. He took up the longest lance he could find and mounted a red horse, and was just about to set out when he heard some one galloping hard behind him and shouting:

"Hako! Stop! The general of the front forces must be I!"

He looked back and saw Eiko his comrade, riding on a white horse, in the act of unsheathing a large sword to draw upon him. Hako's anger was kindled, and as he turned to face his rival he cried:

"Insolent wretch! I have been appointed by the Empress to lead the front forces to battle. Do you dare to stop me?"

"Yes," answered Eiko. "I ought to lead the army. It is you who should follow me."

At this bold reply Hako's anger burst from a spark into a flame.

"Dare you answer me thus? Take that," and he lunged at him with his lance.

But Eiko moved quickly aside, and at the same time, raising his sword, he wounded the head of the General's horse. Obliged to dis-





mount, Hako was about to rush at his antagonist, when Eiko, as quick as lightning, tore from his breast the badge of commandership and galloped away. The action was so quick that Hako stood dazed, not knowing what to do.

The Empress had been a spectator of the scene, and she could not but admire the quickness of the ambitious Eiko, and in order to pacify the rivals she determined to appoint them both to the Generalship of the front army.

So Hako was made commander of the left wing of the front army, and Eiko of the right. One hundred thousand soldiers followed them and marched to put down the rebel Kokai.

Within a short time the two Generals reached the castle where Kokai had fortified himself. When aware of their approach, the wizard said:

"I will blow these two poor children away with one breath." (He little thought how hard he would find the fight.)

With these words Kokai seized an iron rod and mounted a black horse, and rushed forth like an angry tiger to meet his two foes.

As the two young warriors saw him tearing down upon them, they said to each other: "We must not let him escape alive," and they attacked him from the right and from the left with sword and with lance. But the all-powerful Kokai was not to be easily beaten—he whirled his iron rod round like a great water-wheel, and for a long time they fought thus, neither side gaining nor losing. At last, to avoid the wizard's iron rod, Hako turned his horse too quickly; the animal's hoofs struck

against a large stone, and in a fright the horse reared as straight on end as a screen, throwing his master to the ground.

Thereupon Kokai drew his three-edged sword and was about to kill the prostrate Hako, but before the wizard could work his wicked will the brave Eiko had wheeled his horse in front of Kokai and dared him to try his strength with him, and not to kill a fallen man. But Kokai was tired, and he did not feel inclined to face this fresh and dauntless young soldier, so suddenly wheeling his horse round, he fled from the fray.

Hako, who had been only slightly stunned, had by this time got upon his feet, and he and his comrade rushed after the retreating enemy, the one on foot and the other on horseback.

Kokai, seeing that he was pursued, turned upon his nearest assailant, who was, of course, the mounted Eiko, and drawing forth an arrow from the quiver at his back, fitted it to his bow and drew upon Eiko.

As quick as lightning the wary Eiko avoided the shaft, which only touched his helmet strings, and glancing off, fell harmless against Hako's coat of armor.

The wizard saw that both his enemies remained unscathed. He also knew that there was no time to pull a second arrow before they would be upon him, so to save himself he resorted to magic. He stretched forth his wand, and immediately a great flood arose, and Jokwa's army and her brave young Generals were swept away like a falling of autumn leaves on a stream.



Hako and Eiko found themselves struggling neck deep in water, and looking round they saw the ferocious Kokai making towards them through the water with his iron rod on high. They thought every moment that they would be cut down, but they bravely struck out to swim as far as they could from Kokai's reach. All of a sudden they found themselves in front of what seemed to be an island rising straight out of the water. They looked up, and there stood an old man with hair as white as snow, smiling at them. They cried to him to help them. The old man nodded his head and came down to the edge of the water. As soon as his feet touched the flood it divided, and a good road appeared, to the amazement of the drowning men, who now found themselves safe.

Kokai had by this time reached the island which had risen as if by a miracle out of the water, and seeing his enemies thus saved he was furious. He rushed through the water upon the old man, and it seemed as if he would surely be killed. But the old man appeared not in the least dismayed, and calmly awaited the wizard's onslaught.

As Kokai drew near, the old man laughed aloud merrily, and turning into a large and beautiful white crane, flapped his wings and flew upwards into the heavens.

When Hako and Eiko saw this, they knew that their deliverer was no mere human being—was perhaps a god in disguise—and they hoped later on to find out who the venerable old man was.

In the meantime they had retreated, and it being now the close of day, for the sun was setting, both Kokai and the young warriors gave up the idea of fighting more that day.

That night Hako and Eiko decided that it was useless to fight against the wizard Kokai, for he had supernatural powers, while they were only human. So they presented themselves before the Empress Jokwa. After a long consultation, the Empress decided to ask the Fire King, Shikuyu, to help her against the rebel wizard and to lead her army against him.

Now Shikuyu, the Fire King, lived at the South Pole. It was the only safe place for him to be in, for he burnt up everything around him anywhere else, but it was impossible to burn up ice and snow. To look at he was a giant, and stood thirty feet high. His face was just like marble, and his hair and beard long and as white as snow. His strength was stupendous, and he was master of all fire just as Kokai was of water.

"Surely," thought the Empress, "Shikuyu can conquer Kokai." So she sent Eiko to the South Pole to beg Shikuyu to take the war against Kokai into his own hands and conquer him once for all.

The Fire King, on hearing the Empress's request, smiled and said:

"That is an easy matter, to be sure! It was none other than I who came to your rescue when you and your companion were drowning in the flood raised by Kokai!"

Eiko was surprised at learning this. He thanked the Fire King for coming to the res-

cue in their dire need, and then besought him to return with him and lead the war and defeat the wicked Kokai.

Shikuyu did as he was asked, and returned with Eiko to the Empress. She welcomed the Fire King cordially, and at once told him why she had sent for him—to ask him to be the Generalissimo of her army. His reply was very reassuring:

“Do not have any anxiety. I will certainly kill Kokai.”

Shikuyu then placed himself at the head of thirty thousand soldiers, and with Hako and Eiko showing him the way, marched to the enemy’s castle. The Fire King knew the secret of Kokai’s power, and he now told all the soldiers to gather a certain kind of shrub. This they burned in large quantities, and each soldier was then ordered to fill a bag full of the ashes thus obtained.

Kokai, on the other hand, in his own conceit, thought that Shikuyu was of inferior power to himself, and he murmured angrily:

“Even though you are the Fire King, I can soon extinguish you.”

Then he repeated an incantation, and the water-floods rose and welled as high as mountains. Shikuyu, not in the least frightened, ordered his soldiers to scatter the ashes which he had caused them to make. Every man did as he was bid, and such was the power of the plant that they had burned, that as soon as the ashes mingled with the water a stiff mud was formed, and they were all safe from drowning.

Now Kokai the wizard was dismayed when he saw that the Fire King was superior in wisdom to himself, and his anger was so great that he rushed headlong towards the enemy.

Eiko rode to meet him, and the two fought together for some time. They were well matched in a hand-to-hand combat. Hako, who was carefully watching the fray, saw that Eiko began to tire, and fearing that his companion would be killed, he took his place.

But Kokai had tired as well, and feeling himself unable to hold out against Hako, he said artfully:

“You are too magnanimous, thus to fight for your friend and run the risk of being killed. I will not hurt such a good man.”

And he pretended to retreat, turning away the head of his horse. His intention was to throw Hako off his guard and then to wheel round and take him by surprise.

But Shikuyu understood the wily wizard, and he spoke at once:

“You are a coward! You cannot deceive me!”

Saying this, the Fire King made a sign to the unwary Hako to attack him. Kokai now turned upon Shikuyu furiously, but he was tired and unable to fight well, and he soon received a wound in his shoulder. He now broke from the fray and tried to escape in earnest.

While the fight between their leaders had been going on the two armies had stood waiting for the issue. Shikuyu now turned and bade Jokwa’s soldiers charge the enemy’s forces. This they did, and routed them with great



slaughter, and the wizard barely escaped with his life.

It was in vain that Kokai called upon the Water Devil to help him, for Shikuyu knew the counter-charm. The wizard found that the battle was against him. Mad with pain, for his wound began to trouble him, and frenzied with disappointment and fear, he dashed his head against the rocks of Mount Shu and died on the spot.

There was an end of the wicked Kokai, but not of trouble in the Empress Jokwa's Kingdom, as you shall see. The force with which the wizard fell against the rocks was so great that the mountain burst, and fire rushed out from the earth, and one of the pillars upholding the Heavens was broken so that one corner of the sky dropped till it touched the earth.

Shikuyu, the Fire King, took up the body of the wizard and carried it to the Empress Jokwa, who rejoiced greatly that her enemy was vanquished, and her generals victorious. She showered all manner of gifts and honors upon Shikuyu.

But all this time fire was bursting from the mountain broken by the fall of Kokai. Whole villages were destroyed, rice-fields burnt up, river beds filled with the burning lava, and the homeless people were in great distress. So the Empress left the capital as soon as she had rewarded the victor Shikuyu, and journeyed with all speed to the scene of disaster. She found that both Heaven and earth had sustained damage, and the place was so dark

that she had to light her lamp to find out the extent of the havoc that had been wrought.

Having ascertained this, she set to work at repairs. To this end she ordered her subjects to collect stones of five colors—blue, yellow, red, white and black. When she had obtained these, she boiled them with a kind of porcelain in a large caldron, and the mixture became a beautiful paste, and with this she knew that she could mend the sky. Now all was ready.

Summoning the clouds that were sailing ever so high above her head, she mounted them, and rode heavenwards, carrying in her hands the vase containing the paste made from the stones of five colors. She soon reached the corner of the sky that was broken, and applied the paste and mended it. Having done this, she turned her attention to the broken pillar, and with the legs of a very large tortoise she mended it. When this was finished she mounted the clouds and descended to the earth, hoping to find that all was now right, but to her dismay she found that it was still quite dark. Neither the sun shone by day nor the moon by night.

Greatly perplexed, she at last called a meeting of all the wise men of the Kingdom, and asked their advice as to what she should do in this dilemma.

Two of the wisest said:

"The roads of Heaven have been damaged by the late accident, and the Sun and Moon have been obliged to stay at home. Neither the Sun could make his daily journey nor the Moon her nightly one because



of the bad roads. The Sun and Moon do not yet know that your Majesty has mended all that was damaged, so we will go and inform them that since you have repaired them the roads are safe."

The Empress approved of what the wise men suggested, and ordered them to set out on their mission. But this was not easy, for the Palace of the Sun and Moon was many, many hundreds of thousands of miles distant into the East. If they traveled on foot they might never reach the place, they would die of old age on the road. But Jokwa had recourse to magic. She gave her two ambassadors wonderful chariots which could whirl through the air by magic power a thousand miles per minute. They set out in good spirits, riding above the clouds, and after many days they reached the country where the Sun and the Moon were living happily together.

The two ambassadors were granted an interview with their Majesties of Light and asked them why they had for so many days secluded themselves from the Universe? Did they not know that by doing so they plunged the world and all its people into uttermost darkness both day and night?

Replied the Sun and the Moon:

"Surely you know that Mount Shu has suddenly burst forth with fire, and the roads of Heaven have been greatly damaged! I, the Sun, found it impossible to make my daily journey along such rough roads—and certainly the Moon could not issue forth at night! so we both retired into private life for a time."

Then the two wise men bowed themselves to the ground and said:

"Our Empress Jokwa has already repaired the roads with the wonderful stones of five colors, so we beg to assure your Majesties that the roads are just as they were before the eruption took place."

But the Sun and the Moon still hesitated, saying that they had heard that one of the pillars of Heaven had been broken as well, and they feared that, even if the roads had been remade, it would still be dangerous for them to sally forth on their usual journeys.

"You need have no anxiety about the broken pillar," said the two ambassadors. "Our Empress restored it with the legs of a great tortoise, and it is as firm as ever it was."

Then the Sun and Moon appeared satisfied, and they both set out to try the roads. They found that what the Empress's deputies had told them was correct.

After the examination of the heavenly roads, the Sun and Moon again gave light to the earth. All the people rejoiced greatly, and peace and prosperity were secured in China for a long time under the reign of the wise Empress Jokwa.