

Japanese fairy Tale Series N°18

The OGRE'S ARM

Told in English  
by Kate James



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明治廿二年八月十六日第一版發行  
昭和七年八月八日第十六版印刷  
同月十六日發行

日本昔噺第十八號

羅生門

チエームス夫人譯述

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發行兼印刷者

東京市下谷區

上根岸町十七番地

西宮興作



Published by  
Y. Nishinomiya,  
17 Kami Negishi, Tokyo.



### THE OGRE'S ARM.

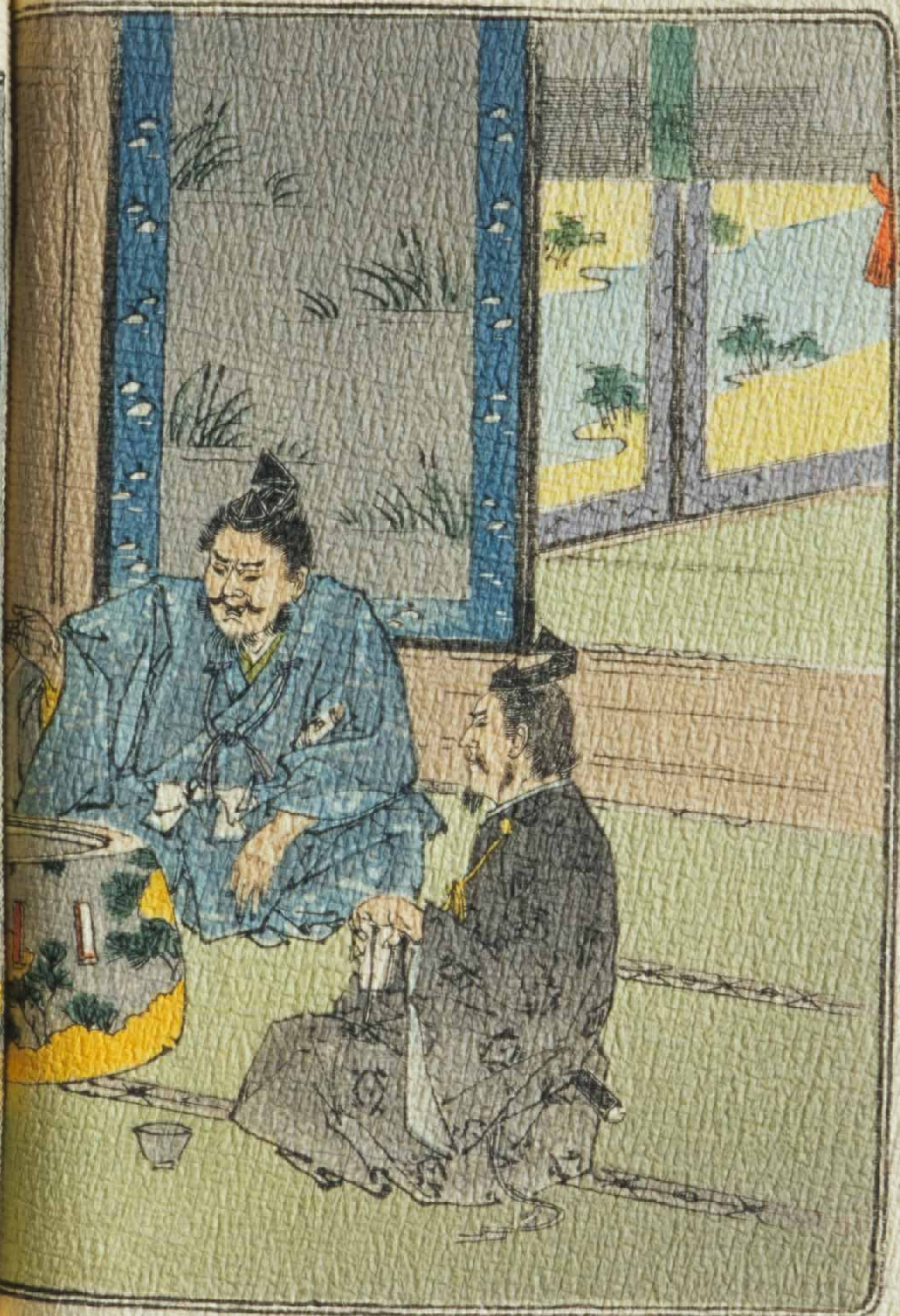
Long long ago, there dwelt in the mountain called Oyeyama a race of fierce ogres. The chief of these ogres was named Shutendoji, and he and his followers came down from time to time upon the city of Kyoto, causing great terror, and

working much mischief. Entering in at the great gate called Rashomon, they robbed and killed all that came in their way, both men and women.

Now, in those days, there dwelt in Kyoto a brave warrior, named Minamoto-no-Raiko. This Raiko had four followers, the most daring of whom was named Tsuna. These followers were known far and near as Raiko's guard. In time of war they fought side by side, and in the intervals of peace they lived together in Raiko's castle.

It happened one dark and stormy night, during one of those brief intervals, that the four warriors

were gathered round the charcoal fire, telling stories of war and adventure, and so wiling away the time as best they might. "What dull times these are!" at last said Tsuna. "Is there no news, no hope of any fighting? I hate this quiet life!" "News there is," answered another of the knights, who had just come into the room. "The ogres have begun their old tricks again. "The ogres!" exclaimed the knights, in awe struck and terrified voices. But Tsuna laughed long and loud. "Do you really believe such old wives' stories?" cried he. His companions made no reply, but shook their heads



with sad and downcast looks.

At last, he who had brought the news looked up and said, "Tsuna, since you are so sure that there are no such creatures as ogres, will you go to the Rashomon to-night, and watch there alone?" "Yes," answered Tsuna, "I will go, and, if needs be alone, although I think one of you might bear me company." But one and all protested that, though fair fight and honourable foe they feared not, yet the ogres they could not, and would not face.

Then up rose Tsuna, and at once began to prepare for his expedition. "How can we be sure that you re-

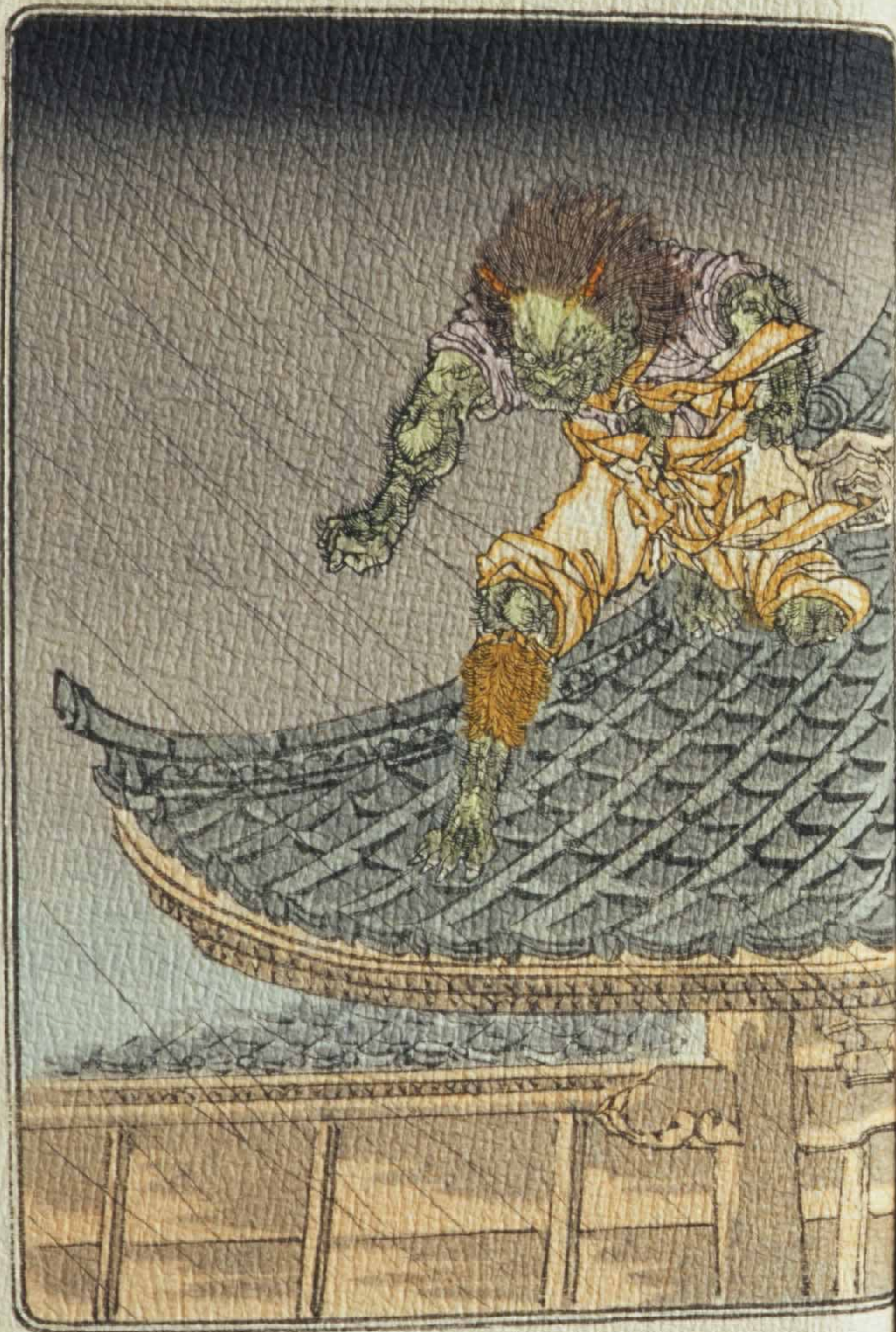
ally go to the Rashomon?" asked his companions. "What sign will you give us?" "You know the notice-board which stands just outside the castle gate," replied Tsuna. "A new notice was posted upon it this very day. Well, if I carry the board, notice and all, and plant it down by the Rashomon where all may see it to-morrow morning, will that satisfy you, since my word of honour does not?" They all cried out that this would satisfy them, and bade him good speed.

That very same night, mounting his horse, and taking the notice-board with him, Tsuna rode alone

to the Rashomon, and there awaited the coming of the enemy, if enemy indeed there were. Not a soul stirred abroad or passed through the gateway, for all were in terror of the ogres. Furthermore the night was windy and rainy, and so dark that it was impossible to see a yard before you. Undaunted, the brave warrior kept his dread and lonely watch, and yet no creature came. The night was almost over, dawn was near, the storm had broken out afresh, when—A HAND, put forth from the roof of the gateway, clutched Tsuna's head.

There, above him, stood an ogre





of fearful aspect, his horrible head armed with a pair of copper coloured horns. With his strong and bony hand he still grasped Tsuna's head and tried to lift him on to the roof. Surprised and horror-stricken, Tsuna was fain to confess to himself that this must indeed be Shutendoji, whose very existence he had doubted. This was no time for thought, however, and Tsuna at once laid hold of the ogre and tried to pull him down.

Then a fierce struggle began. But Tsuna, being no match for the ogre in strength, would assuredly have been lifted from the ground,

had he not succeeded in freeing one hand from the ogre's grasp. With this hand he drew his sword, and dealt one valiant blow at the ogre's arm. The arm fell, severed at the shoulder, and the ogre fled with a hideous yell. As all search for the monster was in vain, Tsuna at length took up the arm, and returned with it to Raiko's castle.

Next morning Tsuna, accompanied by his friends went to consult a famous wizard named Seimei as to what should be done with Shutendoji's arm. Seimei advised that it should be placed in a strong stone chest, and watched by Tsuna night





and day, for seven days. "But," said Seimei to Tsuna, "you must purify yourself by much fasting and prayer, and spend those seven days in holy contemplation, holding converse with none. Unless you faithfully carry out my directions, I foresee that misfortune will surely follow."

Tsuna therefore caused a strong stone chest to be prepared, placed the ogre's arm within it, and, having purified himself by fasting and prayer, sat down alone to watch it. The doors were shut, and all visitors refused admittance. Alone and wrapt in holy contemplation, Tsuna kept watch and ward.



One night, when the seven days and nights were almost accomplished, came a knocking at the gate. "Who is there?" called out Tsuna. "It is your old aunt from the country," answered a cracked and feeble voice. "Pray open the door." Tsuna answered, "I am under a vow to hold converse with none, until seven days be past. I cannot open the door even to my aunt." "I know that," returned the voice: "but I have come a long way on purpose to see you. I am footsore and weary, surely you will not turn me away."

Tsuna still refused for some time; but at last he allowed himself to

be persuaded to open the door. "I have heard of your noble exploit," said the old woman as she came in, "and I have come all this long way to tell you how proud I am of my brave nephew." "And where is the ogre's arm now?" she continued, when Tsuna had thanked her for her kindness in coming to see him. "The arm is in this stone case," said he. "Is it indeed now? Well, would you believe it?—although I have lived all these years, yet I have never in my life seen such a thing. Let me pray have one little peep at it." "I am sorry," answered Tsuna, "but my vow forbids my opening

the case, or showing the arm to any one, even for a moment, until the seven days are past." At this the old woman burst into bitter tears, refusing to be comforted.

Thereupon Tsuna, who was a soft-hearted young warrior,



could withstand her no longer. "Just one look then," said he, and lifted the lid of the chest.



The pretended aunt took up the arm, and seemed to be gazing at it in a kind of rapture, when, suddenly appearing in her true shape, which was none other than that of the ogre Shutendoji, she shouted. "My arm is my own again," and immediately vanished through a hole in the roof.

Tsuna, quickly recovering from his surprise, rushed out; but not a trace of the ogre was to be found.

Sad and crest-fallen, the warrior bent his steps to the house of Raiko, and told him all that had happened. Raiko called his followers round him, and they there and

then solemnly vowed that they would one day destroy the ogres in their stronghold of Oyeyama, or perish in the attempt.





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Nishinomiya & Hasegawa, Inc.  
17 Kami Negishi, Tokyo

