



The Rabbit's Eyes

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Korean

Intermediate
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There was trouble down in the fish world under the waves. Indeed, every creature with fins and a tail was in distress, for the king of the fishes was suffering with a dreadful pain in his mouth. It had come about in this way. One day while swimming around in the waters outside his palace, the king of the fishes saw something hanging in the water that looked as if it were good to eat. So at once His Majesty gulped it down, when, oh horrors! he found he had barely escaped swallowing a fish hook, which stuck fast in his gills. It had been baited by some fishermen up in a boat on the sea top. When the king of the fishes found the dreadful thing in his mouth, he jerked himself away. The line broke but the hook remained, giving the king a fever and much pain.

How to get the iron out and heal His Majesty was now the question. All the wise creatures in the ocean, from the turtle to the gudgeon and from the tittleback to the whale, were summoned to the palace to see what could be done. Many a sage noddle was bent, and eye blinked and fin wagged, as the marine doctors talked the matter over in the council. The turtle was considered the most learned and expert of them all. Many were his feelings of the king's pulse and his lookings down into his throat, before Dr. Turtle would pronounce what was the real trouble or write a prescription for his patient.

Finally, after consultation with the other doctors that had fins and tails, or were in scales and shell, it was decided that nothing less than a poultice made of rabbits' eyes would loosen the hook and end His Majesty's

troubles. So Dr. Turtle was ordered to go to the seashore and invite a rabbit to come down into the world under the sea, that they might make a poultice of his eyes and apply the warm mess to the king's throat. Arriving on the sea beach, at the foot of a high hill. Dr. Turtle, looking far up, found Mr. Rabbit out of his burrow and taking a promenade along the edge of the forest. Forthwith Dr. Turtle waddled across the beach and part way up the hill, climbing hard, until he began to puff and blow. He had enough breath left, however, to salute Brother Bunny with a good morning. Very politely the rabbit returned the greeting.

"It's a hot day," said Dr. Turtle, as he pulled out his handkerchief, wiped his horny forehead, and cleaned the sand out of his claws.

"Yes, but the scenery is so fine. Dr. Turtle, that you must be glad you're out of the water to see such lovely mountains. Don't you think Korea is a fine country? There is no land in the world so beautiful as ours. The mountains, the rivers, the seashore, the forests, the flow-ers" If Dr. Turtle had let the rabbit run on, praising his own country, he would have forgotten his errand; but, thinking of His Majesty, the suffering fish king, with the cruel hook in his mouth. Dr. Turtle interrupted Bunny, saying: "Oh, yes. Brother Bunny, this view of the landscape and country is all very beautiful, but it can't compare to the gems and jewels, trees and flowers, sweet odors and everything lovely down in the world under the sea." At this, the rabbit pricked up his ears. It was all new to him. He had never heard that there was anything under the water but common fishes and seaweed and when these were decayed and washed up along the seashore — well, he had his ideas about them. They did not smell sweet at all. Now, he heard a different story. His curiosity was roused. "What you tell me, my friend, is interesting. Go on." Thereupon Dr. Turtle proceeded to tell of most wonderful mountains and valleys down on the floor of the deep sea, with every kind of rare water plants, red, orange-color, green, blue, white, with trees of gold and silver, besides flowers of every color and delightful perfume, "You surprise me," said Brother Bunny, getting more interested. "Yes, and all sorts of good things to eat and drink, with music and dancing, handsome serving maids and everything nice. Come along and be our guest. Our king has sent me to invite you." "May I go?" asked Brother Bunny, delighted. "Yes, at once. Get on my back and I'll carry you."

So the rabbit ran and the turtle waddled to the water's edge.

"Now hold fast to my front shell," said Dr. Turtle; "we're going under the water." Down, down below the blue

waves they sank until they arrived at the king's palace. There the rabbit found everything was true, as told by the turtle. The colors, the rich gems were as he had said. Dr. Turtle introduced Brother Bunny to some of the princes and princesses of the kingdom and these showed their guest the sights and treasures of the palace, while Dr. Turtle attended the council of doctors to announce the success of his errand. But while Mr. Rabbit was enjoying himself, thinking this was the most wonderful place in the world, he overheard them talking. Then he found out why they had brought him there and shown him such honors. Horrified at the idea of losing his eyes, he determined to save his sight and play the tortoise a smart trick. However, of this he told no one. So when he was politely informed by the royal executioners that he must give up his eyes to make the king well. Brother Bunny broke out with equally polite regrets:

“Really, I am so sorry that His Majesty is ill, and you must excuse me that I cannot help him immediately, for the eyes I have in my head now are not real eyes, but only crystal. I was afraid that sea water would hurt my sight, so I took out my ordinary eyes, buried them in the sand and put on these crystal ones, which I usually wear in very dusty or wet weather.”

At this the faces of the royal officers fell. How could they break the news to His Majesty and disappoint him? Brother Bunny seemed to be really sorry for them and spoke up.

“Oh I don't feel bad about it. If you will allow me to return to the beach, I'll dig them up and return in time for the poultice-making,” said the rabbit. So, getting on Dr. Turtle's back, Brother Bunny was soon out of the water and on land. In a jiffy he jumped off, scampered away, and reached the woods, showing only his cotton tail. Soon he was out of sight. Dr. Turtle shed tears and returned to tell how a rabbit had outwitted him.

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