



GO YEN

Five Yen Japanese Coin

Written by Dennis Y. Yamasato

This is a story of a coin and its travel in and beyond Japan through the Ages.

GO YEN

{Into The Mystic}

PREFACE

CHAPTER	TITLE	PAGES
	Table of Contents	1-3
	List of illustrations	4-5
	Waka poem by Harue	6
	Playlist	6-10
	Preface	11-12
	Map of Place	13
	Timeline History	13-18
	Lineage Chart of the Seven Generations	18

BOOK ONE – A STORY BEGINNING 19-128

CHAPTER	TITLE	PAGES
1	How it began	20-27
2	A simple act of kindness	28-33
3	Not once, not twice, but three times	33-38
4	In a dream	39-43
5	Lake of Love Blood	44-47
6	Doing Your Best is Magic	48-49
7	A Hero, Whistling Bears, and Trappers	50-61
8	Cat from Red Water Inn	62-65
9	Todoshi and Battle at The Never Ending Snake Pit	66-74
10	Todoshi's Tales on the trail	74-128
	A visit to Haunted Blood Town	74-88
	The Killer Tree	88-91

GO YEN

The Owl Tree	92-93
Encounters in Thousand	93-101
Sleeping Shipwrecks Golden Castle	
The Marten	101-104
Visit to Yamasato Village	104-113
The Tanuki, Raccoon Dog	113-116
Tale of the Butterfly	116-118
Laying eggs and feeding fish	118-122
The Moon Egg	123-128

BOOK TWO –JOURNEYS 129-248

CHAPTER	TITLE	PAGES
1	An Ending and Beginning	130-134
2	An encounter and then some	135-149
3	Harue begins	150-164
4	Natural remedies	165-174
5	On the Road Again	175-178
6	Tsuru	178-179
7	Unexpected Encounter	180-188
8	The Seventh Day	189-193
9	Septuary	194-200
10	Strong Water	201-213
11	Another island, another country	214-239
12	What's in a name?	240-248

GO YEN

BOOK THREE - RED EYE DAGGER	249-265
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CHAPTER	TITLE	PAGES
1	Friend	250-252
2	Chamberlain's Ancestor	253-259
3	Journey to Redemption	260-261
4	Honolulu Museum of Arts	262-265

BOOK FOUR – SEVEN BRIDGES	266-311
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CHAPTER	TITLE	PAGES
	Introduction	267
1	SHARK Bridge and Red Camellia	268-272
2	SNAKE Bridge and Red Ruby	273-282
3	GHOST Bridge and Yu' uga na	283-291
4	DRAGON Bridge and Mizukoi	292-295
5	KUMA Bridge and Harue	296-298
6	STORK Bridge and Reimiko	299-301
7	RED Bridge and Princess Yūki	302-311

Acknowledgements	311-312
Postscript	312
AFTERWORD	312

ILLUSTRATIONS BY

1. Grace Ross, pg. 21
2. Haunted Blood Town by Grace Ross, pg. 24
3. Clay Jar with Go Yen and journal by Author, pg. 25
4. Shark Teeth Mountains by Grace Ross, pg. 27
5. Todoshi by Author, pg. 28
6. Teru Teru Bozu by Author, pg. 36
7. Lake of Love Blood by Grace Ross, pg. 46
8. Never Ending Cave by Grace Ross, pg. 54
9. Bear helmet by Author, pg. 60
10. Lucky the Black Cat by Author, pg. 63
11. Lady in Waiting by Author, pg. 65
12. Ninja by Author, pg. 67
13. Hebi River scene by Author, pg. 69
14. Never Ending Snake Pit by Grace Ross, pg. 71
15. The Killer Tree by Author pg. 89
16. The Owl Tree p by Author pg. 92
17. Memorial Supper Place setting Tray by Author.
Pg. 120
18. Moon Egg by Author inspired by rock from Brandon
and Lori Ross, pg. 123
19. Princess Yūki before the Lake of Love Blood by
Author, pg. 132

20. White Seal by Olivia Ross, pg. 147
21. Evil Chamberlain by Author, pg. 156
22. Grandmother by Author, pg. 168
23. Fox face by Author, pg. 187
24. Kuma by Author, pg. 191
25. Flower arrangement by Author's mother Harue Yamasato pg. 213
26. Seven Stones by Author, pg. 226
27. Photo of magic stick and sheath by Trevor and Kim Ross, respectively pg.228
28. Map of Jap Road, Beaumont, Texas 77705, pg. 242
29. Red Eye Dagger by Olivia Ross , pg. 251
30. Olivia Ross, pg. 251
31. Book Cover "Lethal Weapons, Samurai Weapons and Armour", pg. 264
32. Shark Bridge by Author, pg. 268
33. Snake Bridge by Author, pg. 273
34. Map of Lake of Love Blood, Bear clan and Spider Alliance, and Seven bridges by Author, pg.276
35. Ghost Bridge by Author, pg. 283
36. Dragon Bridge by Author, pg. 292
37. Kuma Bridge by Author, pg. 296
38. Tsuru Bridge by Author, pg. 299
39. Tsuru clay toy by Author, pg.301
40. Red Bridge by Author, pg. 302
41. Clay fish gift from Trevor and Kim Ross, pg. 304
42. Map of Japan by Author, pg. 13

Be strong like water

Water purifies the soul

Water cleanse the body

Water gives life to everything

Water is patient to flow

These five lines in Waka format were composed by Harue (pronounced Ha ru a) in the year 1877 seven days after giving birth to Mizukoi, a daughter, the sixth descendant of Princess Yūki of the Castle of the Lake of Love Blood.

Waka poetry is the most traditional form of Japanese verse in five lines of 5-7-5-7-7 syllables

PLAYLIST

After watching a TV movie, it occurred why the concept of soundtrack should apply only to film. Why can't a book have

a soundtrack or playlist that provides music to the author's written words in a book? So while reading certain portions of a story the reader can listen to a song and its lyrics that might help evoke the reader's interest. I don't believe this has ever been done before, but I could be wrong.

So in thinking this process through, I thought the playlist would use the reader's sense of hearing, in addition to, the reader's sense of sight. Now think back studying or pleasure reading in college while listening to the music in the background. So this is not a new thing but just a little bit more formalized. Being a baby boomer my music history is from the 1950's, 1960's, and 1970's. For me Music died on December 31, 1979, but for my chorus college professor the music died the night of my sophomore luau banquet when I, as the singer of a band called Freddy and the F Troop, sang or shouted out the songs, "Gloria", "House of the Rising Sun", and "And I Love Her". I mean no disrespect of songwriters, musicians, and singers whose works happened after the golden age of music.

My recommended playlist will basically come from those decades of music. The following playlist will cite the song title, artist or band, recorded year, and album name along with the certain chapter, page, or paragraph. Also, within the story a specific song title in bold text will be bracketed { }.

The choice of songs is somewhat like picking out the right shoes for the right occasion. But as you already know by experience you sometimes attend the wrong occasion for the correct choice of shoes. Also, you know in life there are always exceptions to the rule, so you will find songs that come from the 80's.

GO YEN

The recommended and optional playlist will be listed prior to the story so the reader can upload the songs before ever turning a page or play the song upon seeing the {song} while reading. For old farts like me, you could just choose to hum the tune or sing the familiar chorus, for these songs will forever be in your memory's jukebox.

Who would think or relate the music of these decades to the Japanese story of a coin and a lineage of seven Japanese women?

Location by Book/ Chap/ pg.	Song Title	Artist or Band	Album/ year
Table of Contents	Into The Mystic	Van Morrison Or Pure Heart (Jon Yamasato- vocal)	Van Morrison Moondance, 1970 Or Pure Heart 2, 1999
1/ 1/18	Town Without Pity	Gene Pitney	Music for Pleasure, 1980
1/1/21	Mack the Knife	Bobby Darin	1958 (?)
1/ 2/24	All Alone Again, Naturally	Gilbert O'Sullivan	Back to Front. 1972
1/ 4/ 33	Sleepwalk	Johnny and Santos	Santos and Johnny, 1959
1/ 6/42	Do you Believe in Magic	The Loving Spoonful	The Loving Spoonful, 1965
1/7/50	Theme of The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly	Covered by Hugh Moten negro	1698
1/8/58	Walk Don't Run	The Ventures	The Ventures, 1960
1/9/62	The River	Joni Mitchell	Blue, 1971

GO YEN

1/10/70	Respect	Aretha Franklin	Never Loved a Man the Way I Love You, 1967
1/10/72	In A Gadda Da Vida	Iron Butterfly	In A Gadda Da Vida, 1968
1/10/80	Willow Weep for Me	Chad and Jeromy	Yesterday, 1964
1/10/83	Betty Davis Eyes	Kim Carnes	Mistaken Identity, 1981
1/10/83	These Eyes	The Guess Who	The Guess Who? 1969
1/10/107	Dog and Butterfly	Heart	Dog and Butterfly, 1978
1/10/112	Dark Side of The Moon	Pink Floyd	Dark Side of The Moon, 1973
2/1/120	Somewhere	Andy Williams	Love Songs, 1966
2/2/128	House of the Rising Sun	The Animals	Eric Burdon and the Animals, 1964
2/2/137	Sukiyaki	Kyu Sakamoto	1963 Billboard Top Pop Hits, 1994
2/4/151	Naturally	Kalapana	Kalapana, 1975
2/7/171	Old Man	Neil Young	Harvest, 1972
2/7/174	Mr. Blue	The Fleetwoods	The Fleetwoods, 1959
2/7/175	Blue Velvet	Bobby Vinton	Blue Velvet, 1963
2/7/176	Foxy Lady	Jimi Hendrix	Are You Experienced, 1967
2/9/182	Seventh Son	Johnny Rivers	Meanwhile back at the Whiskey a Go Go, 1965
2/10/195	Sailing	Christopher Cross	Christopher Cross, 1979
2/10/198	Homeward Bound	Simon and Garfunkel	Parsley, Sage, Rosemary, and Thyme, 1966
2/11/205	Red Sails in the Sunset	Platters	Reflection. 1960
2/11/213	Give Peace A Chance	John Lennon and the Plastic Ono Band	Live Peace in Toronto, 1969
2/11/215	Stones	Neil	Stones, 1971

GO YEN

2/11/223	Hawaii Five O	Diamond Ventures	Hawaii Five O,1969
2/12/229	Galveston	Glenn Campbell	Glenn Campbell and Jimmy Webb in Session,2012
2/12/230	American Pie	Don Mclean	American Pie,1971
2/12/235	Rescue Me	Fontella Bass	The New Look,1966
3/1/239	You Got A Friend	James Taylor	Mud Slide Slim and the Blue Horizon,1971
3/2/242	I Can't Get No Satisfaction	Rolling Stones	Out of Our Heads, 1965
3/2/243	The Wanderer	Dion DiMucci	Runaround Sue,1961
3/3/249	Redemption Song	Bob Marley and the Wailers	Uprising,1980
4/Introduction/ 255	Seven Bridges Road	Steve Young	Rock Salt and Nails,1969
4/Bridge 1/257	Tragedy	Bee Gees	Staying Alive,1979
4/Bridge 2/262	Ruby Don't Take Your Love To Town	Kenny Rogers and The First Edition	The First Edition,1967
4/Bridge 2/267	What's Going On	Marvin Gaye	What's going on?,1971
4/Bridge 3/271	Spooky	Dennis Yost and Classic 4	1967
4/Bridge 4/281	Desolation Row	Bob Dylan	Highway 61 Revisited,1965
4/Bridge 5/284	Bridge Over Troubled Water	Simon and Garfunkel	Bridge Over Troubled Water,1970
4/Bridge 6/288	Memories	Elvis Presley	Memories,1968
4/Bridge 5/296	There But For Fortune	Joan Baez cover	There but for fortune, Phil Ochs,1989
End of Book /299	Somewhere Over The Rainbow	Israel Kamakawiiole	Ka 'Ano'i I1990

PREFACE

In my lifetime, acquaintances asked the unavoidable question “Do I speak Japanese?”

My standard reply was “No. Because having been born one year after the end of World War II my father commanded me to speak only English and be seen as wholly American to avoid any racial prejudice.”

The number of times the same question was asked is beyond the total count of my fingers and toes. These episodes repeated until a revealing dinner conversation.

One night during dinner with my oldest brother Royden and Irene, his wife, and my wife, Charleen, an apology was offered by Royden which would forever change my history.

Royden confessed “When I attended Hilo Hongwanji Japanese language school, I behaved very, very, very badly! Bad enough that the Principal strongly proclaimed to Mom and Pop that their other two sons, I the youngest, would never step inside the Japanese language school. Royden gave a belated apology for his bad behavior.”

After getting over the initial shock we all had a good laugh.

But I may have said or thought of later “Gee. I can’t go back in time to correct my standard reply to the many who asked.”

It still boils down to the cause of my ignorance of Japanese language was reduced from a World War II conflict between the country where my Grandfathers were

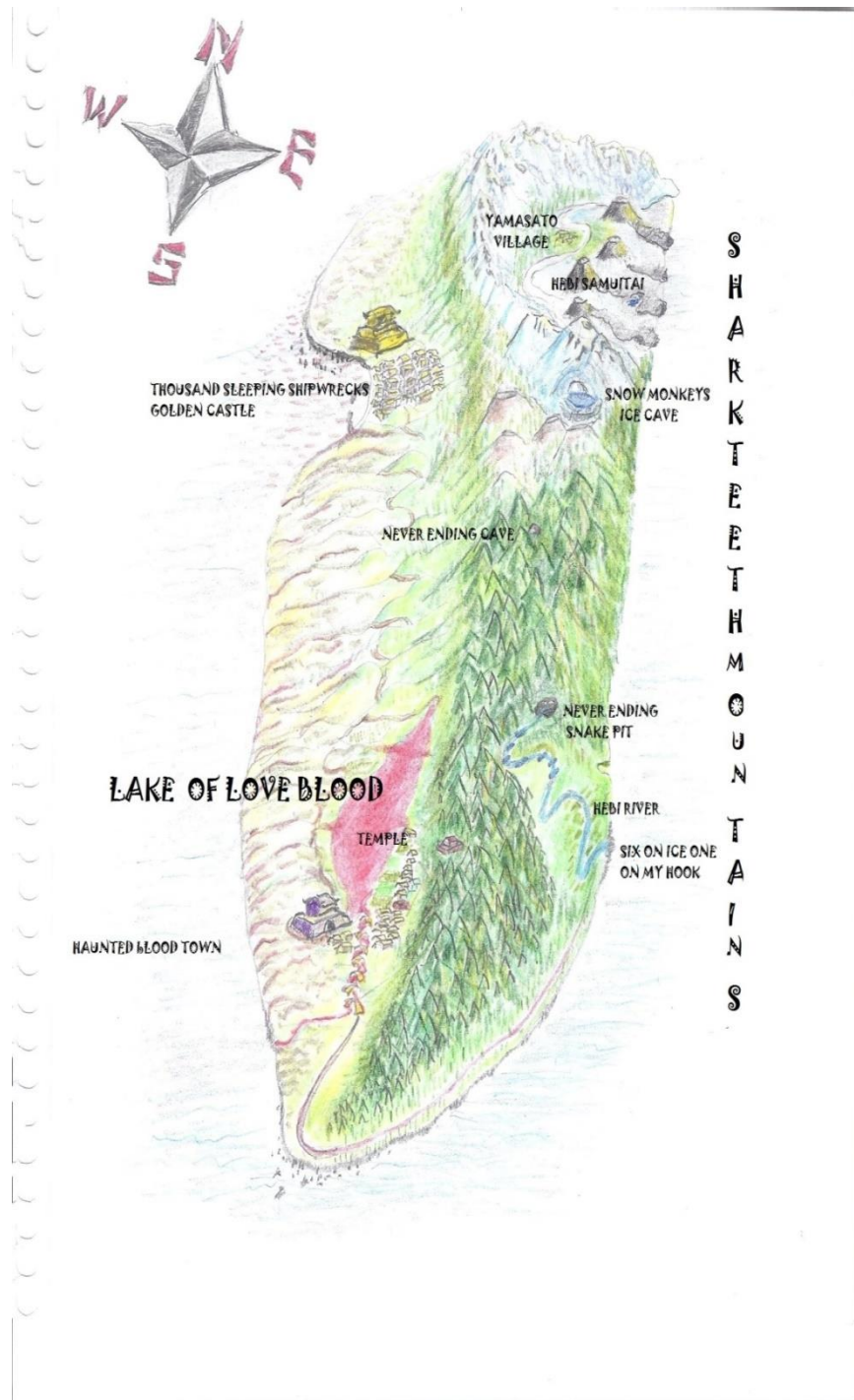
born and the country where I was born to simply an older brother's mischievousness. Life plays many jokes on the living.

Therefore, to avoid any reader's judgement on my lack of Japanese language skills it is my hope the reader will allow the author some sense of literary freedom in the creation of Japanese words and names. Where the usage blends well, the text will be in Japanese followed by the loose Japanese to English translation, otherwise, it will be written in English.

I do not claim any adequacy in Japanese nor do I claim to have competence of the English language. But my imagination still dwells between my ears even after seventy decades.

Shall we begin? The reader may want to scan through the timeline history on pages 13 to 18, in order to, take in the sequence of lives of characters.

GO YEN



Book / Chapter	Date	Events Timeline and commentary
		HEIAN PERIOD (794 to 1185)
3/4	1180 to 1185	Genpai War

GO YEN

KAMAKURA PERIOD (1185 to 1333)

3/2	1244	<i>Ancestor of the Evil Chamberlain travels to China</i>
3/2	1215 to 1294	<i>Life and times of Kublai Khan</i>
1 / 1	1281	<i>Go Yen coined by unknown Buddhist Monk in the Shark Teeth Mountain Monastery</i>

MUROMACHI PERIOD (1392 to 1573)

MOMOYAMA PERIOD (1573 to 1615)

EDO PERIOD (1615 to 1868)

4/ 1	1630	<i>Lady Red Camellia born at Thousand Sleeping Shipwreck Golden castle and the first woman in what is considered Princess Yūki's lineage.</i>
4/ 1		<i>Lady Red Camellia visits a food vendor and Lady Red Camellia assassinated at the Shark Bridge.</i>
4/ 2	1650	<i>Lady Red Ruby born at Thousand Sleeping Shipwreck Golden Castle. Lady Red Ruby dies 1676 in the Bear and Shark stomps the Spider Battle. Lady Red Ruby is the mother of Princess Yūki and the second woman Princess Yūki's lineage.</i>
4/ 2		<i>Consort Lady Red Ruby and Lord Teru Teru Bozu are married at</i>

GO YEN

		<i>Bridge Two which would be renamed The Snake Bridge.</i>
4/2	1675	<i>Princess Yūki is born at Castle of the Lake and considered the third woman of her lineage.</i>
4/2	1676	<i>Lady Red Ruby is killed by an arrow in the Bear and Shark stomps the Spider Battle</i>
4/7		<i>Yūki and Lady in Waiting acting as sisters meet Todoshi at the Red Bridge</i>
1/4	1691	<i>Yūki falls in love with Rice Farmer</i>
2/1	1692	<i>Yūki and Lady in Waiting travel to sheltered cove and Yūki dies after giving birth to daughter Yu' uga na. Yu'uga na is the fourth woman in what is considered Princess Yūki's lineage.</i>
2/3	1693	<i>Evil Chamberlain tortures and kills the Lady in Waiting</i>
2/3	1693	<i>Black Cat at Red Water Inn drinks from the Lady in Waiting's pool of blood</i>
2/2	1709	<i>Seventeen year old Yu' uga na meets the owner of the Red Water Inn named Fist, Yobushi,</i>
4/3	1709	<i>Yu' uga na and daughter of circus owner go to the Ghost Bridge</i>
1/1	1680	<i>First exchange of Go Yen by Todoshi</i>
1/2	1682	<i>Todoshi leaves monastery at age 47 yrs. old</i>
1/3		<i>Todoshi meets Teru Teru Bozu</i>

GO YEN

1 / 7		<i>Circus Owner plots with Bear Trappers and Ninja</i>
1 / 7		<i>Teru Teru Bozu (Great Lord of Castle of the Lake) death</i>
1 / 7	1698	<i>Todoshi at Battle of Never Ending Cave age 63 yrs. old</i>
1 / 9		<i>Twenty one years pass</i>
1 / 9	1719	<i>Todoshi meets Kuma the alpha Bear Age 84 years old Todoshi at Battle of Never Ending Snake Pit</i>
1 / 9		<i>Next 14 yrs. Todoshi wanders in the Shark Teeth Mountains and meets the Killer tree, Marten, and Raccoon Dog</i>
1 / 8	1733	<i>Todoshi walks out of the Shark Teeth Mountains at age 98 yrs. old</i>
1 / 8	1733	<i>Seven days before his death Todoshi hides his journal in a clay jar</i>
1/3	1845	<i>Seventy years pass by Harue is born and considered the fifth woman in Princess Yūki's lineage</i>
1 / 1	1852 Vernal Equinox	<i>At age seven Harue finds Go Yen and Todoshi's journal</i>
1 / 8		<i>Harue meets Black cat, Lucky</i>
1 / 8		<i>Lady in Waiting kills Tax Collector</i>
2 / 2	Autumn of 1862	<i>Harue walks to the Kuma Bridge Grandmother dies and Harue is 17 yrs. old</i>
2 / 3		<i>Harue begins her journey retracing Todoshi's footsteps into the Shark Teeth Mountains</i>
2 / 3	10/1862	<i>Harue and Lucky meets bear cub</i>
2 / 4	11/1862	<i>Harue meets Doctor in the Shark Teeth Mountains</i>
2 / 5 and 6	12/1862	<i>Harue meets Snow Monkeys and Tsuru</i>

GO YEN

2 / 7	Winter Solstice of 1862	Age seventeen Harue meets Ohkubo
2 / 8	1863	Lady in Waiting kills Fox face MEIJI PERIOD (1868 to 1912)
2 / 8		Harue reaches Doctor's home in Thousand Sleeping Shipwrecks Golden Castle
2 / 8	1875	Harue marries the younger cousin of Doctor
	1877	Mizukoi is born at Doctor's home. And Mizukoi is considered the sixth of Princess Yūki lineage
2 / 11	1922	Age forty seven son goes to work on a sugar plantation in Hawaii
4/ 4		Mizukoi walks on the Dragon Bridge
2/11	1914	At the age of 37 yrs. old Mizukoi gives birth to daughter Reimiko the seventh in the Princess Yuki's lineage
2/11		Reimiko travels through Southeast Asia, India, China, and Mongolia Reimiko goes to the Tsuru Bridge TAISHO PERIOD (1912 to 1926)
2/11	1912	Harue dies at age sixty seven.
		SHOWA PERIOD (1926 to 1989)
2/11	1944	Harue's grandson dies on Banzai Hill in the Vosges forest in France. Jerome's uncle is given Go Yen.
	12/7/1944	Mizukoi dies during the Tonankai Earthquake occurring @ 1:35 p.m.
2/11	1967	Uncle gives Jerome Go Yen and asked Jerome to return Go Yen to a Japanese family
1 / 1	1977	Yukio is given the very old Japanese five yen coin
		HEISEI PERIOD (1989 to - - - -)
1/1	2008	The author begins to draft the Go Yen Tale.
2/9	2011	On March 11 during the Fukushima

GO YEN

*Tsunami and Nuclear Power Plant
explosions Reimiko at the age of 97
yrs. old and her family drown.*

Lineage of Yūki	Mother and Father	Life Span	Life Span in years
<i>First</i>	Red Camellia and Lord of Castle Lake	1628 to 1647	19
<i>Second</i>	Red Ruby and Lord Teru Teru Bozu	1647 to 1676	29
<i>Third</i>	Princess Yūki and Rice Farmer	1675 to 1692	17
<i>Fourth</i>	Yu' uga na Yu'uga na becomes <u>Ninja</u> <u>Number</u> <u>Seventy Seven</u> And <u>Ninja</u> <u>Number one</u> <u>hundred</u> <u>seventy</u> <u>seven</u> and Ninja <u>Number one</u> <u>hundred</u> <u>seventy seven</u>	1692 to 1709 In the span of 153 years passed through the unknown history of three generations of women, of which, only Yu'uga na is counted in the lineage of Princess Yūki	27
<i>Fifth</i>	Harue and younger cousin of Doctor	1845 to 1912	67
<i>Sixth</i>	Mizukoi and descendant of Tailor family	1877 to 1944	67
<i>Seventh</i>	Reimiko and descendant of Sake Brewer family	1914 to 2011	97

BOOK ONE

A STORY BEGINNING

GO YEN



Go Yen, A Story Beginning

CHAPTER 1 HOW IT BEGAN

Yukio is my Japanese middle name and I possess Go Yen, a coin with a special power. Decades ago I was given this very ancient bronze Japanese coin. I accepted the coin as an object of appreciation from a peer returning back to Texas to work on a shrimp boat off Galveston just like Forrest Gump. Or maybe the coin giving was part of a long journey back to a Japanese home. Whatever the intention, the coin and its companions carry a story with many chapters. The Texan said centuries ago when the Great Kublai Khan attacked the golden islands of Japan during the Kamakura period, (1185 -1333), the inhabitants of a western Japanese providence melted down a large meditating bronze Buddha statue for coins, such as, the very old coin now in my possession.

In 2008, two creative imaginations collided, creating for the better, when Grace Ross, a granddaughter of age seven, drew a map of places named Haunted Blood Town, Lake of Love Blood, Shark Teeth Mountains, Never Ending Snake Pit, and Never Ending Cave. The map was graciously given to Charleen, my wife, and hangs in our home.

Go Yen, A Story Beginning



Please excuse me
for the ink is barely dry
and darkness drapes
the Shark Teeth
Mountains so let Go
Yen, the coin, continue
the story. Throughout
the stories, Go Yen
voice is in Italics.

*My name is Go Yen,
for my value is five yen.
My monetary value*

*today may not even buy you a combination of large popcorn
and medium size soda at your favorite movie theater, if you
are ever allowed to buy a movie ticket in the future. I was
given the abilities of hearing, thought and to influence the
actions of my human carrier. But I have no voice! I share the
frustrations of some humans who lack the ability to speak
and must use sign language with their fingers, but I being a
simple coin have no arms, no hands, and no fingers. And
now days some humans use eye movements to choose on a
computer an alphabet, number, or symbol to communicate
their thoughts. Alas I have no magic eyes. Bet you would be
scared out of your seat if an eye suddenly opened on a coin
in your hand. So perhaps I am grateful for not having eyes. I
have outlived hundreds of generations of my human owners.
Owners? Maybe that is a*

Go Yen, A Story Beginning

wrong word in some sense because I was not in chain legging and forced to follow the commands of a master. I simply do not have legs and owe no obedience to any other. So today I reside in a hollow wooden box measuring two inches wide, inch and a half long, and inch and a quarter high. The box does not have a lock or hinges so one must solve a puzzle to open. My copartner is the eye inspiration for the Red Eye Dagger. Now the Author of "Go Yen" has become my voice and through my influence he has written this novel of my life, but more importantly the history of seven strong women of Princess Yūki's lineage and her Lady in Waiting.

My story is the journey of exchanges from hand to hand for the price of goods or services. And this is a story of seven generations of strong Japanese women. So my tale begins in Haunted Blood Town on the South shore of Lake of Love Blood. My coin casting happened when a great invader from the Western Kingdom sailed a thousand invading war ships against my island only to be slammed into the ragged and rocky coastline by the Kamikaze or divine wind. A bronze Buddhist statue was melted down along with certain weights of silver and gold.

In 1281 a Buddhist monk carefully poured the melted mixture into a mold and waited for the bronze mixture to cool. Upon cooling the two parts of the mold were pulled apart and the monk snipped off the two small strands of bronze and left two very small bumps on the edge of me. The crow of a red and yellow rooster sitting upon the Shark

Go Yen, A Story Beginning

Teeth Mountains monastery thatched hen hut announced my birth.

At the exact nano second of my birth the Kamikaze wind swept through the monastery shaking red clay shingles and the yellow stalks and long slender green leaves of swaying surrounding bamboo. The worn white rice paper screen doors shook steadily for seconds and rattled in the grooves within the equally worn wooden floor. In my moments of meditations I have wondered if my magical essence, the abilities to listen, have thought, and influence, came from that exact moment of divine wind. Would you think the reincarnated, wondering soul of a wise Buddhist monk could have been blown into my casted bronze body?

In 1680, my first exchange happened when I was still a bright bronze coin. Todoshi (pronounced "to do shi") a monk in the monastery kitchen bought bags of brown rice, bundled leafy green vegetables, and white spotted eggs in a brown woven basket from a farmer living in the fertile valley below on the Southeast shore of Lake of Love Blood.

"You drive a hard bargain but I hope the gods will favor my next rice harvest and the vegetable garden will be plentiful, so I can feed my children." said the farmer.

"Please accept this good luck amulet" replied Todoshi. The amulet was a thin oval shape bronze, about a half inch wide and an inch and half long, one side embossed with a Tsuru (crane) in flight symbolizing long life the other side pictured a

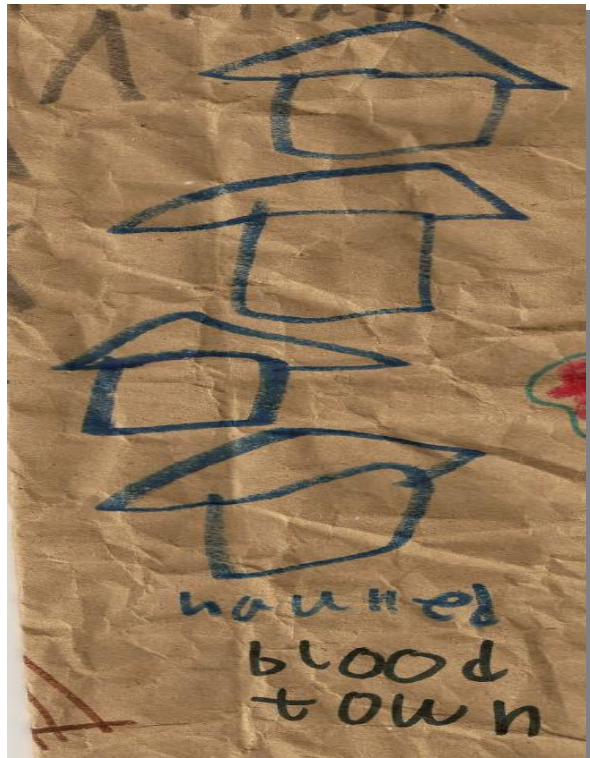
Go Yen, A Story Beginning

tied bundle of stalks of rice symbolizing a fruitful life. It was in a purple and gold elegantly brocaded pouch tied closed with an equal elegant silver and orange length of twine. Todoshi placed his palms together through his prayer beads and gently chanted a Buddhist prayer for the farmer.

When the farmer arrived at his thatched home the old man hid me in a dark secret void of a dusty jar of an earthy odor and color. Many years passed in Haunted Blood Town and I could not understand why I was being imprisoned. The farmer seemed to be overjoyed during my first exchange. But alas I am a coin with little experience and not a very wise coin!

*Haunted Blood
Town*

**{Town Without
Pity}**



GO YEN

Go Yen, A Story Beginning

After the Princess Yūki disappeared, every year the rice paddies were flooded with the reddish waters from Lake of Love Blood. When cooked, this special rice had a warm reddish coloring and a wonderful slightly salty taste. From within my dark void of a jar I listened to the playfulness and laughter of children who grew up and left. Eventually the last farmer died and on an early chilly spring morning I was found and a story begins!

Haunted Blood Town was now a busy and bustling city with squawking buyers and sounds of vendors hawking their goods and services. The rice paddies were almost all gone and the farmer's beneficiaries had grown wealthy. The old Buddhist Monastery in the Shark Teeth Mountains still overlooked the Haunted Blood Town and Castle of Lake of Love Blood stands west of the reddish surface of Lake of Love Blood. Why even on a clear day of bluish skies with white wispy horsetail clouds, the lake surface rippled blood red. A very, very, very spaghetti sauce red.



Go Yen and Todoshi Journal in a clay pot

GO YEN

Go Yen, A Story Beginning

I will never forget the day Harue (translated in English Springtime Bay) found me. I was tossed and turned. Clinking and a clanking in every which way in the jar to the point of getting motion sickness. It is a good thing a coin can't puke. Among the other things I don't have is a mouth. I thought this was the grandfather of all earthquakes. Little did I know a young girl of seven had found the jar, my prison for one hundred and twenty two years, and who out of curiosity began to shake the clay pot. Suddenly bright blue rays of sunlight streamed down from the mouth of the jar. The musky odor was replaced by the crisp, cool air of spring on the day of Vernal Equinox in March, 1852.

After one hundred and twenty two years I felt free!! FREE!!! Do you know how it feels to be free? Too bad a coin has no arms to wave in excitement, nor legs to jump up and down! With a cool blue sky above me I sensed a warm hand beneath me. Harue cleansed me with the bottom of her kimono moistened with the reddish waters from Lake of Love Blood and suddenly a wisp of divine wind dried my shiny bronze face. As Harue looked upon the characters on one side of me I clearly saw the Japanese character Bun for learning reflected on the reddish ripples of Lake of Love Blood.

In the jar was, also, a journal written by Todoshi the Buddhist Monk. The journal documented his adventures which encompassed travels around Lake of Love Blood.

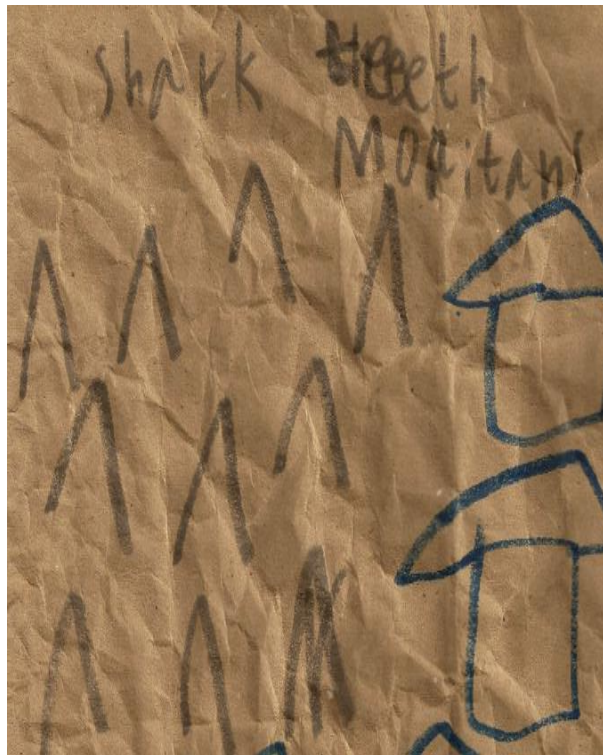
GO YEN

Go Yen, A Story Beginning

Todoshi noted his up and down hiking through Shark Teeth Mountains, his visits to Haunted Blood Town, and unheard of places, such as, Never Ending Cave and Never Ending Snake Pit, Thousand Sleeping Shipwrecks Golden Castle, and Yamasato Village.

As Harue read on, she held me in her left hand and began rubbing me with her fingers. My cramped stiffed body felt relaxed from this massage. During the next days Harue carried me in a secret pocket of her kimono.

While being a magical coin I, Go Yen, could not command Harue how to be happy. Only her karma can do that. Good fortune is a gentle gust of whimsical wind. In the years to follow I sensed the gathering of items placed in a secret bundle which foretold a journey for Harue and me, Go Yen.



Shark Teeth Mountains

{Mack the Knife}



Go Yen, A Story Beginning

CHAPTER 2 A SIMPLE ACT OF KINDNESS



Todoshi

Go Yen, A Story Beginning

Harue had done her chores for the day and we went to our secret and secluded Cherry Blossom tree. Little Harue placed me on top of a flat black boulder next to her. Ah! The soft sunlight felt warm and occasionally a whisper of wind would rush through and make the leaves and pink blossoms rustle “read me a story, read me a story, Oh! Please read me the story.” It was a fine day to stretch or catch a nap. Alas, for the last couple days we were not alone. Harue brought along Todoshi’s journal. The journal was in excellent condition except for a slender seven-eighths of an inch puncture in the leather cover. First she thumbed through the book and whispered to herself.

“The calligraphy is superb! The journal is well kept except a couple of pages appear to be slightly water damaged.” Harue read out loud for my pleasure Go Yen.

It was a dark, dangerous, death stricken time! Warlords of fiefs bordering Lake of Love Blood hired roving ronin, masterless samurai, and planned strategies to conquer neighboring fiefs. Some warlords went straight to neck and gut with swords and spears, others planned the demise of other castle lords with the use poison tea or fish, while others sent seductive women and then blackmailed the guilt ridden lord. The thundering sounds of hammers and anvils rang and banged out loud throughout the nights as weapons were forged and sharpened in Haunted Blood Town.

Todoshi wrote of the origin of the reddish color of Lake of Love Blood. One legend said that after a great warrior lord died in the battle at Never Ending Cave, the surviving Samurai numbering seven hundred and seventy seven slit

Go Yen, A Story Beginning

their bellies then their warm red blood slowly trickled into the lake for the love of their lord.

A more romantic but tragically truer version said a young exquisite princess fell in love with a lower caste rice farmer, a forbidden love. She punctured her ear so the thin blade, used as a hairpin, entered her brain, a way of death without any scaring of flesh and slowly sank into the deep recesses of Lake of Love Blood. Rice Farmers who flooded their fields with reddish waters of Lake of Love Blood said the special taste of their rice came from the love of the beautiful princess! There are so many stories within a story.

At the age of seven times seven, feeling like a half full tea cup Todoshi the monk was excused from the monastery.

Todoshi said to the Master Monk "I seek to see myself and greet the world!"

The Master Monk replied "To see one's true self, I suggest you observe the behavior of the forest's inhabitants and not the behavior of other men. You are unlike most men. The lessons in the Shark Teeth Mountains are written not in words and books nor spoken but truth will be reveal by observing wildlife behavior. Are we any different? "

So Todoshi changed from his gold and purple ceremonial robe of embroidered symbols of ying and yang for more the suitable traveling clothing of a roving ronin, a plain kimono with roughly weaved blue patterns against a forest green course fabric. He stepped down from the open hallway onto the first flat stepping stone in the miniature garden of small bonsai trees on each side of a clear mountain creek.

Go Yen, A Story Beginning

Bending down to walk through the rear garden gate he took the first stride of his journey into the Shark Teeth Mountains. Unknowingly this would be the last time he would pass through the gate. There would be no looking back.

{All Alone Naturally}

Days passed into weeks, the sun disappeared into a gloomy, gray sky and not a single silver leaf moved in the still, stupefying air. Todoshi sat on a low, smooth, large, black basaltic boulder to remove an irritating pebble lodged between his bruised big right toe and flip flop. It was difficult to tell the time of day, much less the season. In Shark Teeth Mountains there are no farmers, no rest stops, and no rolls of toilet paper. But on the forest floor were plenty of dried leaves. Not recommended for soft bottomed city folks. Only wild animals live here, such as, a clan of whistling bears occupying the Never Ending Cave in the Shark Teeth Mountains. Travelers swear they hear the whistling of bears in the Shark Teeth Mountains but confess they never laid eyes on any. Travelers say at first the whistling sounds bring smiles but complain after a while the whistling becomes very annoying, very annoying.

Remember when someone constantly tapped a pencil on a table top next to you while studying for a hard final exam? What can you do except be annoyed?

A tablecloth of brown and orange large leaves laid on the large black basaltic boulder, Todoshi serves his meal of dark red azuki beans, dried silver skin fish, and salted white radish. A meal fit for a farmer or a lord! Todoshi gathers water from the gentle gurgling flow of clear cold water while

Go Yen, A Story Beginning

heads of water- worn rocks occasionally stand taller than the cold slowly swirling water.

” It is great to be alive at such a fine place! Such a fine seven star dining room and excellent chef” Todoshi exalts!”

An army some with black and some with reddish brown armor approaches in a single line. A line has no end that Todoshi can see. The objective is without a doubt to find food and feed their queen. Todoshi sighs and watches the army carry away azuki beans and pieces of dried silver skin fish. Not with a sense of resignation but a simple act of kindness toward the smallest of creatures. Ants!

He follows the ant trail and sees the complex ant hill and the various lines of ants carrying their different foods and housing material converging at the central ant hill.

“Such a magnificent and complex society” says Todoshi. Ah! It is the way of the group’s organization to depend on each other”.

Todoshi thought out loud amongst the chirping green rice birds “Ah! It is as Master Monk instructed me as the village farmers, town merchants, samurai, and lower noble lords all pledge their existence to the Castle Lord so do the slave ants, worker ants, soldier ants and drone ants all exist to serve the Queen of the colony.” And so Todoshi bows in respect to the ant hill, cleans, packs up, and he wonders what other human behaviors will be mirrored by observing other wildlife behaviors.



Go Yen, A Story Beginning

“What am I dedicated to?” Is the simple truth of Nature’s way, a way without thought? Should one only trust one’s own instinct to find the Way?”

CHAPTER 3 NOT ONCE, NOT TWICE, BUT THREE TIMES

Todoshi arrives at the fork of two different directions everyone eventually comes to. Ah! It is the big moment of choice!

“Life is a continuous and consecutive pattern of decisions and consequences” Todoshi whispers to himself. It is a moment to make a decision! This way or that way?

As a later poet asked “Should I take the less traveled way?” One path is clearly worn down by conventional thinking. The left path is best described as an ancient way as tangled roots woven over and around stones often hiding the path.

“I shall greet the way of Whatever!” Todoshi enthusiastically shouts out loud and his exclamation reverberates off the nearly verdant vertical valley walls. Not once not twice but three times mixing with the sounds of whistling.

Go Yen, A Story Beginning

The Way of whatever is not meant in the sense of not caring what the outcome will be but taking the chance of multitudes of different futures, whatever may present whenever!

Haven't you ever taken the Way?

During Todoshi's following days that grew into weeks, many decisions are made on which way to go. Left or right, up or down, forward or back tracking, and resting occasionally where the ancient overgrowth off the trail opened to a dark green bed of moss beneath a low canopy of fragrant forest green mint leaves. No better place to stretch your arms wider than the valley walls.

"Harue! Harue! Where are you? The meal is hot and our guest is seated except you. "Little Harue!" "Grandmother shouts out not once, not twice, but three times.

"What's the matter with that girl?" mutters Grandmother to herself.

Harue carefully bundles Todoshi's journal within the geometric folds of a faded square red and blue cloth and tucks me into the secret pocket of her kimono sleeve.

"Grandmother I am coming." calls out Harue.

"Gomen nasai(excuse me) Grandmother, I was reading and studying my alphabets and practicing my numbers so I can read receipts correctly and count the change so I am not cheated by the street vendors." said Harue as she bowed not once, not twice, but three times to Grandmother and her longtime neighbor friend.

Go Yen, A Story Beginning

The neighbor, Aunty, gave a polite nod to Harue and said with a smile “Wash your hands and sit next to me. I want to you to serve the food from the cooking pot. It looks like you have grown seven inches since I saw you last in Haunted Blood Town”

Harue obediently poured the miso soup over two scoops of slightly reddish rice in two greenish glazed bowls and served two small dishes purple pickled eggplant to Aunty and Grandmother, then Harue made a bowl and plate for herself.

All three chanted in appreciation of the nutrition provided by nature “All in life is temporary, fleeting, and fragile.” Not once, not twice, but three times.

On Sunday work was not scheduled for Harue, so the adventures of Todoshi continued. The encounter of the third kind happened while trekking a barely used trail about seven feet below the bare ridgeline, weatherworn layers of lichen covered basaltic rock. Along the barely used trail, tree tops blocked out the sight of any points of reference like a snow capped mountain or the coastline and sea. Hence, thinking he was walking toward the coastline he was confused. Todoshi was walking in a circular loop on the ridge where up was down and down was up! Todoshi had to lengthen his stride to avoid stepping into a puddle of pure rainwater. Not once, not twice, but three times. Instead of continuing his journey on this ridge, Todoshi had inadvertently been going around in a circle not once, not twice, but three times. He pondered what the teaching of this experience was as he sat

Go Yen, A Story Beginning

next to the puddle. Master had said “Every moment is a teaching moment! Teaching is not isolated incidents in our lives. It is a constant continuum.”

Todoshi sat and watched a shiny blue and green dragonfly hover above the puddle surface and gazed at the dragonfly eating the little squirming baby mosquitoes squiggling in the puddle. At the same time Todoshi tolerated the blood sucking mosquitoes landing on his bare skin and sucking out his warm blood. Unlike the behavior of a person pestered by these irritating buzzing bugs, Todoshi did not squash the mosquitoes with a slap but exhibited much restraint, due to, his belief all life is precious and exists for some purpose. Todoshi observed all life must eat to survive at the dismay of the one providing lunch!

It was while sitting that Todoshi gave a slight nod to a ronin wearing an eye patch, a red and white checkered kimono and lacking a left arm. Todoshi thought he must have been in a lot of fights on the losing side since this one had lost an arm and eye, but he seemed to carry a dignity one only achieves by winning. Such a contradiction! Not once, not twice, but three times the stranger appeared. On the third passing the one eyed ronin started

Teru Teru Bozu



Go Yen, A Story Beginning

the conversation.

“Please forgive my intrusion of your admirable rest.” said the stranger. He was seven inches taller than Todoshi and carried a katana, the single long sword forged by a master sword maker folding the hot metal a secret number of times. The slight curve to its blade gave the blade strength unknown by straight blades. This sword was not made to puncture but to make a pure clean slice into a human body. The signature of the sword maker was etched into the part of the blade inserted into the handle. His flip flops showed a lot of wear and tear but his overall appearance was clean and neat.

“You look quite familiar because I have seen my own red and white reflections in this puddle not once, not twice, but three times. My name is Teru Teru Bozu and I seek a place called Never Ending Cave and the Clan of Whistling Bears. I have heard a group of bear trappers are going to capture the whistling bears and sell the bears to a circus sideshow. I plan to prevent this wrong!” said the tall one arm one eyed ronin.

“Why should free animals be caught and caged for the entertainment of men?” Though without an eye and arm this man had a sense of swagger with grace thought the travelling monk

“My name is Todoshi. For the last number of years I was a monk at the Monastery which sits above the Lake of Love Blood below the Shark Teeth Mountains. I have been sitting and pondering the existence of this vast ocean of a puddle, reflecting own my humble self.”

Go Yen, A Story Beginning

Todoshi explained the Master Monk's instructions to observe the behavior of Shark Teeth Mountain's wildlife to find his true self and the truth of men's behavior. "It appears our chance encounter was predestined. Though I abstain from hurting any creature, ants, whistling bears, or bear trappers, please allow my wit to help you in this noble quest. My ideas are seven times as sharp as the cutting edge of my sword! And the greedy circus owner and bear hunters shall not kidnap one my teachers of the Shark Teeth Mountains." Todoshi exclaims.

Teru replies "Yes there is no greater weapon in Japan than a sharp wit!" "Your words are true and yet I have lived a life where by arrows, lances, or swords I have lost an ally and worst of all a true love, my wife."

He did not elaborate any further. Teru did not bring up his true love is Red Ruby, to avoid revealing his true identity.

As Todoshi and Teru begin their quest the journal gently slipped from little Harue hands into her lap, her heavy eyelids fell. Soon in her dream Harue sat in front of a lacquered polished mirror within a great lord mansion overlooking the blue lake but she did not notice the lake was a color blue. The mirror reflected a perfect oval face with almond eyes, a long neck framed by dark falling hair upon straight shoulders.

Outside in the castle's moonlit bonsai garden, a dark blue nightingale, silhouetted against a full silver moon, sang her melodic song not once, not twice, but three times.



Go Yen, A Story Beginning

{Sleepwalk}

CHAPTER 4 IN A DREAM

Harue transforms into the beautiful princess who will change the color of the lake from blue to red. She quickly change her attire from her favorite pink and green silk sleepwear to a non-descript kimono worn by commoners.

“If your father the Lord ever discovers these unescorted excursions you and I will be in deep trouble” scolds the Lady in Waiting.

“You meant deep shit didn’t you, but it is so exciting” a smiling Yūki replies.

Yūki slips away from the sleepy castle just as the early morning sun peaks over the peaks and the yellow sunlight gradually slides down the lush green valleys of Shark Teeth Mountains. Only her Lady in waiting knows of Yūki’s secret excursions and during each outing the Lady in Waiting does exactly that at the

Go Yen, A Story Beginning

Castle of the Lake East gate. She dutifully waits for Yūki's return before other castle servants rose. Yūki circumvents Haunted Blood Town whose vendors have begun to set up shop for eager bargain seeking morning shoppers. Yūki nods her head for she knows all or most of the vendors and what they sell. This day will be lost in historical records but will be retold at many meal times for generations.

Yūki's secret outings began out of curiosity on how commoners lived in the world beyond and below the castle walls. The people she met did not know of her noble position. Not even the rice farmer whom Yūki had fallen in love with. The first day he was busy bending and tending over his rice fields. The "Excuse me sir" he heard was unlike any voice he had ever heard like the warm rays of the sun peeking through the clouds. It could, also, have been the song of a morning bird mixed in the cool early breeze.

"Yes, can I help you?" the rice farmer replied gruffly without stopping the task of pulling weeds while bent over. At first he did not look up, whether just of fear or a lack of curiosity or shyness. The farmer was a wallflower having a fear of facing rejection by a beautiful girl. So it was not a lack of curiosity.

"You seem to be someone who can explain how rice is grown in abundance. Could you please tell me?" asked Yūki as she bowed in respect to the farmer.

He achingly straightened up feeling the tightening of his lower back and the vision of that perfect oval face with

Go Yen, A Story Beginning

almond eyes, a long neck framed with dark falling hair upon straight shoulders made him forget the annoying pain in his lower back. His heart stopped beating, his brain went blank for a moment and his vocal chords froze. Words got stuck in his throat. The timeclock of his body had stopped! He lost all sense of where he was.

Yūki repeated her question. “Ah! Ah! You seem to be an expert who can explain how rice is grown in abundance. Could you please tell me sir?” As once again she bowed in respect, thinking “boy you are a hard nut to crack.”

He wiped his sweaty brow with an already brown sweat-stained cloth and explained how rice is grown and processed. As both walked around the rice fields and mill, Yūki felt an unknown warm feeling towards the rice farmer. Yūki’s face flushed red and warmer when the rice farmer spoke of the fertilization of the rice seed.

The young girl asked the slightly older boy “I like stories so tell me your story, please.” “I’m afraid there is not much to say. I worked on my family rice fields for all my life while tending to the needs of my parents when they were alive and the rice which is their family legacy for seven generations.” He paused facing the field, placing his hands together and said a silent prayer and then continued “I think we are about the same age but I have never seen you around in town or at temple functions. You must not be from around here. I work constantly in the fields with not much extra time to do other things or hang around people. In an effort not to appear as a loner, the boy farmer says “Not that I don’t mind being

Go Yen, A Story Beginning

around people.” When growing up, my father taught me what I know about growing rice, running the rice mill properly, and how to crossbreed seeds for better rice in the next coming harvests.

He introduced me to the families of rice merchants who buy rice from farmers at a reasonable price then they sell our rice to customers all over Japan.”As he talked, Yūki thought “he is a handsome, guy rough in spots but kind of earthy like the ground we stand on but absolutely not dirty.”. She just listened and nodded.

“Do you have a story?” asked the rice farmer. Yūki replied “I am usually confined to the house but I occasionally sneak out like today. I feel like a bird in a cage and I like meeting different people.” The farmer warned “There are mostly good but bad people do exist, so you must be careful all the time.” “Now you sound like my parents” she sat back and laughed

The minutes went by too fast and Princess Yūki anticipated her Lady in Waiting would be anxious for her return to the castle. “I must return home but I did enjoy your story so I hope you won’t mind my coming back someday” The rice farmer looked at the sky and then his eyes met hers to say “I cannot wait until the next time.” He smiled and watched her disappear in the distance.

During the days before the end, neither spoke of their feelings. It was enough to be together. These secret rendezvous continued for seven months and then suddenly stopped without any explanation.

Go Yen, A Story Beginning

The Farmer waited a year but the oval face girl with almond eyes and a long neck framed with a dark falling hair upon straight shoulders never returned.

“Where is she? What happened to her? Oh! I should have known that a pretty girl like her can always find someone far better than a rice farmer” the farmer silently muttered to himself. One day the rice farmer flooded his rice fields but the bluish lake water had turned a reddish color. He did not get excited or worried about his rice crop. For some strange reason, the happiness he felt when first meeting Yūki returned into his heart.

The farmer said “Let it be. Let it be. Let it be.”

And so for generations to come the rice harvest would produce special reddish colored rice that had a very slight salty taste. Just imagine the white steam rising from the reddish colored hot rice with a green pickled vegetable in a bluish glazed chawan (rice bowl).

The rice farmer never knew what became of oval face Yūki but grew content with his special reddish tint rice, unknowingly the color of her love. Nor did he know of the daughter he had fathered.



Go Yen, A Story Beginning

CHAPTER 5 THE LAKE OF LOVE BLOOD

Ancient lore passed on verbally repeats the story of how the Earth God split his belly to capture the Sea God. The lake is elongated northerly direction along the route of migrating wild geese. Its length is about seven times its width. In an ancient geological epoch it was a seven hundred feet deep rift valley created by two parallel fault lines. The graben sides were steep drops along both sides. The prehistoric island of Japan was slowly created on the western edge of the Ring of Fire later to be known as the Pacific Rim. The Shark Teeth Mountains developed well-defined drainage systems of V shaped valleys and an Alpine mountain range with peaks resembling the gnarly teeth of a great shark was created as the Pacific plate made of heavier basaltic crept under and pushing the the Asian plate made of lighter granite plate long before Man took a breath.

Through the passage of eons and the erosive power of water the lake began to fill up like your bath tub. But instead

Go Yen, A Story Beginning

of overflowing onto the bathroom vinyl floor, the lake water carved out a path toward the southern tip of Japan to the Pacific Ocean. Sediment carried by the accumulation of rain drops eroding the Shark Teeth Mountains eventually settled to the bottom of the lake. Thousands of layers of sediment, no more than a millimeter, thick harden into what is known as sedimentary rock, and raised the lake floor to its present level. Then as the Shark Teeth Mountains began to grow various ground cover and the seasons of the years shed decaying leaves and dead trees, the lake bottom began a fertile organic supermarket feeding the lake's underwater life. The winters caused water to freeze in the fractured granite that formed the unique shark teeth alpine mountain tops.

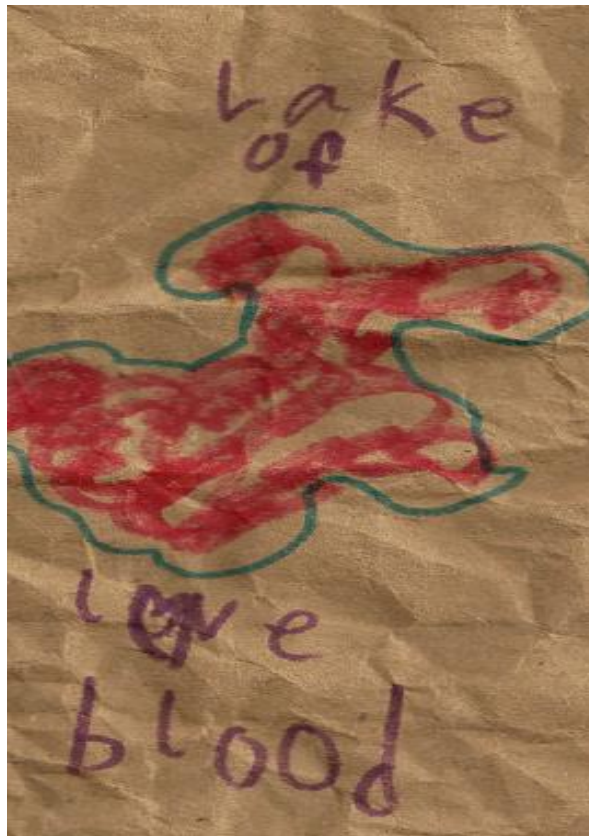
To the west of the lake, the land extending to the Sea of Japan was a flat incline of granite and scattered patches of basaltic of lava. Through the ages of immense wind storms, dust and desert sand from Chinese mainland were launched into the air and carried across the Sea of Japan and deposited as brownish yellow sand dunes. Long before the history of men, the sea level gradually rose to about 250 feet higher than the present sea level, reversing the river flow, allowing sea water to flow north and mixing with the lake freshwater. The lake essentially became an interior sea inhabited with sea water and brackish water species. Then after millions of years of upward swelling pressure within the earth, the lake bottom bounced back up and the river resumed its seaward flow. Saltwater oysters acclimated to the brackish water of the lake.

Go Yen, A Story Beginning

One of the economic resources of the Castle of the Lake fiefdom is the harvesting of perfect white pearls from the lake. These were the best of pearls harvested from the lake. Other lower quality pearls were grown in oyster farms north of the line drawn across the lake from the highest tower of Castle of the Lake to the bell arch of the monastery in the Shark Teeth Mountains.

The Castle of the Lake belonged to the Bear Clan. The fiefdom encompassed the shoreline from the castle and along the lake's South shoreline to the monastery. The fiefdom extended to the South tip of Japan controlling the river and the seven bridges. The fiefdom would charge the other fiefdoms tolls on freight going both ways along the river of seven bridges.

Lake of Love Blood



Go Yen, A Story Beginning

The smaller castle lords were jealous and envious of the Castle of the Lake's economic power. Who wouldn't be! After the lifeless Princess Yūki sank into the Lake of Love Blood, the pearl farmers were surprised when reddish colored pearls appeared when oysters were shucked. The reddish colored pearls were even more cherished by its wearers so the pearl gatherers were more than happy while getting richer each harvest season.



Go Yen, A Story Beginning

{Do You Believe in Magic}

CHAPTER 6 DOING YOUR BEST IS MAGIC

On each ordinary day Harue accomplished her daily chores. I was always hidden comfortably in a secret pocket. Harue would always bring home the sweetest of fruits, the freshest vegetables, and most flavorful fish. At the age of seven Harue did not have the experiences to acquire the uncanny ability to come home with the best value for the little money Grandmother could afford.

The reason for Harue's ability was not because of the vendors' kindness in Haunted Blood Town. Vendors would sell you the worst commodity for as much money as they could get from Customers. So often, I guided her hand reaching out for the best value unknowingly to Harue or the vendor amazed by the extraordinary selection of a seven year old girl.

GO YEN

Go Yen, A Story Beginning

When I was in Harue's possession, I had my first encounter with other coins. To my surprise, we could not communicate with each other. The other coins would just jingle together in Harue's purse. We coins did not have the same family coinage, but I was saddened when coins disappeared spent for either goods or services.

My magical powers were not applied for buying the best of pearls or finest fabrics but for what Harue needed. I did my best to guide her selection.



Go Yen, A Story Beginning

CHAPTER 7 A HERO, WHISTLING BEARS, AND BEAR TRAPPERS

Sitting at the edge of Lake of Love Blood, Harue continued reading while I listened to the tales in Todoshi's journal. Before their quest, Todoshi boiled a pot of green tea and poured a hot steaming cup for Teru.

"What a more perfect moment of being" whispered Todoshi.

The Eastern sky over Shark Teeth Mountains was filled with gold and orange clouds and a rising sun. The West slope of the valley was tinted gold as the sun rose and turned dew drops into golden dust. Occasionally the morning silence was broken with the fluttering of wings as small birds flew by. Teru put out the small, smothering camp fire as Todoshi packed the utensils he had. Without speaking to each other both started walking, at times, Teru in the lead and other times Todoshi was ahead.

Go Yen, A Story Beginning

Traversing up the side of the valley, they then along the ridge, and down the sloping side of another valley continued for warm and humid days. At the head of one valley Todoshi told Teru Teru the story from the Master Monk. Before the history of man when the God of Earth Fire and the God of Water battled in close contact these vertical rectangular columns of black smooth face rock were built by the God of Earth Fire as castle walls. This battle still continues today. Ying versus Yang.

The Master Monk went on to describe Shark Teeth Mountains as the abandoned house of the Earth Fire God. The Earth Fire God left behind a network of empty veins, in which hot molten blood of the Earth Fire God once flowed. Such places as the Never Ending Snake Pit and the Never Ending Cave originated from these empty veins of the God of Earth Fire. The God of Water still continued the battle even though the God of Earth Fire had moved its residence to fiery sea mounts erupting under the sea.

Good fortune smiled upon Teru and Todoshi. One day they came upon a patch of wild blue and purple berries and signs of fresh bear tracks and scat amongst the wet morning ground. In total Todoshi counted seven bears. The clan numbered two female adults, two male cubs, and two male cubs and one female cub.

One eyed and one-armed, Teru took the lead through yellow knee high grass, still moistened with morning dew. Teru's remaining eye had become superior to anyone's ordinary pair of eyes.

Go Yen, A Story Beginning

His other senses were also heightened, for example, Todoshi had noticed that Teru displayed an uncanny ability to avoid swinging branches that Todoshi had pushed aside but the branch would spring back across the path. Todoshi had also noticed he could not detect any sounds of Teru's footwear stepped along the trail. Teru's walking was motion without the sound of movement, just being in a different space as time moved forward.

While Teru was leading, Todoshi continued to devise a clever plan on how to save the whistling clan of bears from the bear trappers. A sword of sharp wit was slicing through the humid air and not a single drop of blood would stain the Shark Teeth Mountains.

To break the monotony while Teru was in the lead Todoshi lobbed a small pebble aimed at Teru's left shoulder. The small pebble reached its highest point, began a downward flight, and reached a point seven inches away from Teru's left shoulder. Without seeing the falling pebble, Teru ever so slightly turned his upper body to the right and began laughing as the silly stone pebble fell to the ground.

Gravity had done its job.

Teru told Todoshi of what he had heard while at the Red Water inn, located on Obake Neko Street in the darker side of Haunted Blood Town. As he drank his warm white sake Teru overheard, through the rice paper shoji doors, the boisterous laughter followed by sinister whispers. One Bear Trapper had been contacted by a greedy circus owner who wanted more fame and fortune.

Go Yen, A Story Beginning

The circus owner schemed and said “The whistling bears in his side show would sell a lot of admission tickets.”

This circus owner would finance a hunting expedition of seven bear trappers. All expenses paid, all new trapping equipment would become the trappers’ own property, seven days salary for each five days, and a month salary as bonus for the capture of the whole bear clan. If he had all bears, he would have no competition from other circus owners who might copy his idea.

The Bear Trapper said “When was the last time any of you had the money to buy the best trapping equipment? And when you ever had someone engage your services for so much money or offer such a handsome big bonus?”

One Bear Hunter asked “Hey, having people pay to hear the whistling bears like chirping birds are a good money maker. Why can’t we catch the bears and make our own show? I bet we would be sitting pretty after seven months of putting on shows all over the place.” The head hunter yelled out “Hey stupid are you hiding a stash of cash from us, because it would take a high pile of cash to make your stupid idea into a real show with tents, cages, wagons to pull the stuff from town to town, new clothes for to present the bears, advertise and then sell tickets, not to mention acquiring the various permits to put the shows. You think we can do these things dressed ragged, filthy smelling of dried blood and do all the work I went through?” Hey, boss why don’t we catch the whistling bears, then give them to the Circus owner and after he does all those things you said, we go and slit his

Go Yen, A Story Beginning

throat and get rid of his family, maybe sell them into the slave market.” “Now you are using your atama {head}. That is why you my number one bear bro.” said the head hunter. “All you guys, we are going to do that but if anyone spills the beans after drinking sake and tries to impress a geisha saying you are looking at a man who will be rich in seven months. Remember I will personally gut you from neck to crotch and hang you up from a low hanging tree so the forest creatures, wild dogs and beetles can feast on the guts spilling out.” And so this greedy gang of bear hunters made a pact with the Circus owner.

NEVER ENDING CAVE

With this information Todoshi deduced the seven bear trappers would be highly skilled at their craft; their equipment would be the best; and the circus owner’s greed would infect the trappers’ darkened hearts.

No longer was it the thrill of tracking and capture but it was the money. A lot of money! It is always the money that drives men to do Evil! Todoshi tripled his resolve and seven



Go Yen, A Story Beginning

creases appeared on his forehead comprised of two vertical in line above his nose bridge and five horizontal across his brow. The plan must be a swift, single silent slice through the air. One smooth and simple swing of the sword of sharp wit!

The circus owner did not reveal he hired a ninja agent to follow the seven hunters' expedition and protect his interest. He nailed a note where the Circus owner knew some unknown ordinary looking traveler would retrieve the note that would eventually be delivered into the hands of Ninja Two (Ninjas were assigned numbers instead of regular names) who was the leader of ninjas since Ninja One died in Haunted Blood Town. You number eight pick the six who will be with you to follow this group of bear hunters until they return and turn over their imprisoned whistling bears to the Circus owner. If anything looks suspicious, you number eight can dispose of the bunch.

Todoshi finally shared his plan with Teru. The heart of Todoshi's plan was to use the bear trappers' greed as the sharp slicing sword edge that will end the Trappers' ill-advised expedition. After listening, Teru was impressed. To Teru, Todoshi possessed all the true human qualities of honesty, humility, caring, and insightfulness all glued together by integrity.

"Whatever our faith holds for both of us I will always cherish your companionship in our quest" offered Teru to Todoshi.

The night before encountering the Bear hunters, Teru and Todoshi sat across the smoldering camp fire while sipping

Go Yen, A Story Beginning

tea and snacking on wild berries. Todoshi opened up the night's conversation "Hey, Teru on nights like this when I hear the shaking rustling leaves and swaying branches way above the forest floor, it is like the generation of monks I have known and those who have preceded my stay at the Shark Teeth Mountain monastery are making their presence known. Chanting "All in life is temporary, fleeting and fragile"

Todoshi asked a nagging question but questions that were irrelevant to their quest. "Teru how did it come about that you lost your right eye and your left arm?" "Hey don't you think that's too personal?" replied Teru with a crunch forehead and a glaring, annoyed eye. "So, so sorry and please forgive my bad manners. I know for a fact that both lost does not in any way diminished your fighting abilities". Said Todoshi whose shoulders slumped forward and head down bowed in Teru's direction. So Todoshi was satisfied to go on to another subject of campfire conversation. But as Todoshi raised his eyes to meet Teru's glancing stare; Teru said "In the warrior's world samurai often compare and brag of their scars and killings in battle. They do it like the shark hunter and the shark scholar trying to out beat each other by comparing and boasting who has the biggest and baddish scars while drinking a bunch of sake bottles. In the past whenever someone ask about how I lost my right eye or left arm I would just give a cold stare and say "I don't know and if you know please tell me" and no answer would be given. But tonight I feel it is my time to share what happened, especially to someone who I know does not ask the question so he may be entertained by my answers. Does it matter to

Go Yen, A Story Beginning

which loss I describe first?" Todoshi just nodded a silent negative nod while waving his open face palms.

{Theme of The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly}

Teru began to chronicle how he lost the right eye. "In the Bear and Shark ate a fox War I was a younger version of myself and maybe a little less cautious. Along with the fighting Monks on the frontline I strode forward a few steps behind with my katana raised above my war helmet. As I brought down my katana in sideward slice a small piece of metal from the fighting forward of me flew straight into my right eye. I was carried back to the rear where I was cared for but told I would only have one eye for the rest of my life and provided with the eye patch I'm wearing this night." With that Teru lifted the eye patch up exposing a scarred eye lid underneath. "The left arm came off as a result of sword cut by a ninja assassin who slipped into the Castle of the Lake one night. Even with my wounded left arm I was able to fatally plunge my short sword into his jugular and spared the Castle Lord's life." With that Teru did not give up any revelation of his true identity. Todoshi bowed deeply and said "'All in life is temporary, fleeting and fragile" three times. Teru accepted Todoshi's prayer and said "Thank you it is good to remind ourselves that the principle also applies to our body form and mental state." With that both Teru and Todoshi pulled their light travel blankets upward and laid their heads upon a pillow of green pine leaves. It took Teru a longer time to fall asleep because he stared into the starry sky and felt relieved that he answered Todoshi's curiosity without revealing the missing love of Red Ruby.

Go Yen, A Story Beginning

The bear trappers were camped within seven miles of the Never Ending Cave. For one day and night Todoshi and Teru watered and fertilized the bear trappers' seeds of greed and anger by telling the trappers how the circus owner would accumulate a mountain of gold from a side show of whistling bears.

"Ah! I wish I was the circus owner! What a big draw the whistling bears would be. I can see the long lines of ticket buyers in the thousands. And maybe even the lords would pay for private shows. And just maybe the Emperor would give a handsome amount of treasure and royal feast in his honorable summer residence" Todoshi wished out loud.

"What a disgrace! That someone who sits on his fat behind reaps in all the money while the others who sweat and toil and even risk injury and death just get a small nibble of a few grains of low quality rice" throws in Teru Teru adding flameable fuel to the fire.

Todoshi picked up the smallest stone pebble to represent the bear trappers' payment and Teru pointed to a nearby boulder greater in size than all seven bear trappers combined with all the equipment and supplies they were packing to the Never Ending Cave. The bear trappers' eyes bulged out like big balloons, some shouted how they were being cheated because they did all the dirty work.

"Damn! The Circus owner sits in town drinking warm sake with geishas and gambling while we eat lousy dried jerky meat, live in the stinking damp and dark forest, bitten by mosquitoes and ticks." One bear hunter said.

Go Yen, A Story Beginning

Another angrily whispered “We should go back and cut him up and use the pieces of the circus owner body parts as bear bait and then we capture the bears for our own sideshow.” Then he turned and whispered to the next hunter “You and me can kill the other five and go half half instead of only one seventh of the profit.”

His conspirator replied “Yeah that sounds good to me. I can picture us dressed as two Lords and drinking and gambling in all the posh geisha houses in Haunted Blood Town.” Todoshi, Teru, and all seven trappers sat within a circle of seven camp fires warding off creatures hungry for human fatty flesh. Beyond the glow, in the high branches of a tree the ninja released his fingers from the string of his bow the arrow flew a distance of seven hundred feet.

The ninja was a fletcher skilled in making his arrows sound like the fluttering wings of small birds as the arrow flew toward its target. In Todoshi’s journal only this page and the next were water stained by many teardrops. By far the saddest day was the day the ninja’s arrow pierced Teru’s heart as the fluttering of bird wings ended with a thud and the air was filled with a second of silence followed by the screams of the bear trappers.

The horrified seven bear trappers scattered into the dark shadows of night leaving behind all the traps and hunting equipment and were never seen again in this part of the Shark Teeth Mountains. It was reasoned the ninja had seven more arrows in his arrow sheath.

A sadden Todoshi carried his friend’s body out of the Shark Teeth Mountains back to Haunted Blood Town. Teru’s

Go Yen, A Story Beginning

*blood dropped onto the cold dirt of the trail as well as
Todoshi's grieving teardrops. .*

*Hearing of a ronin and monk who prevented the capture
of the bear clan a visiting group of seven high ranking
samurai wanting to pay homage saw Teru's one eyed face
only to recognize Teru as their own missing great lord of
Castle of Lake of Love Blood.*

*"How can this be? How shall we honor our Lord?
Perhaps an artist can create a fine warrior helmet in the
shape of a Bear without using bear trophies." said the oldest
of the group of seven.*

*Besides the still and empty body seven Buddhist monks
chanted seven times "All in life is temporary, fleeting, and
fragile. Teru Teru was entombed wearing a wooden*



*head dress fashioned as a bear's head with gold fashioned
bear teeth and given a new Buddhist name for his next life
"Grand Protector of Bears".*

*Todoshi's plan had failed because the blood of his
companion stained the trail back through Shark Teeth*

Go Yen, A Story Beginning

Mountains. But the legend of the great lord killed in the battle of Never Ending Cave began to grow. Meal time stories would describe how a witless Buddhist monk and a great lord of the lake fought against an army of seven hundred ninja to save the clan of whistling bears from the bear trappers.

Todoshi spent days and nights quelling the hatred in his heart and prayed for Teru's soul. "Should I seek revenge? How can I not have known Teru was of royal bearing? Am I a fool to think I am so wise that I could protect my friend against death?" all these thoughts swirled within Todoshi's mind.

For this moment, Todoshi's consciousness had forgotten the temporary existence of all living things. Todoshi would never return to the Shark Teeth Mountains Monastery and his next great adventure would be at the Never Ending Snake Pit.



Go Yen, A Story Beginning

CHAPTER 8

A CAT FROM RED WATER INN

One day after reading Todoshi's journal Harue again was very late for dinner. In order to make up time little Harue took a short cut through the darker side of Haunted Blood Town.

Grandmother had warned Harue about going there but she really wanted to be home as quickly as possible. Really! For sure! Harue ran through the narrow streets and crossing the Shark, Snake, and the Ghost bridges which were three of the seven foot bridges until she could no longer run.

{Walk Don't Run}

While running everyone appeared as a blur but now she felt that everyone she walked pass were modoku, i.e. same but different. Harue found herself on Obake Neko Street and slowed down to a stop in front of the Red Water Inn. She stared at the cloth banner hanging above the closed

Go Yen, A Story Beginning

entrance. Yes the same inn where Teru overheard the bear trappers' scheme.

From out of the dark side alley next to the Red Water Inn a long hair black cat with high pointed ears jumped out of the shadows. The cat was not a house pet but a skinny black stray. This skinny black cat tail held high brushed against Harue's leg and purred. Old grandmother said cats have nine lives unlike humans but this stray black cat was like different. The moment of convergence the black cat, Go Yen, Todoshi's journal and Harue was the beginning of a new tale which would mysteriously bring back a fore mentioned character. Can you guess who?

LUCKY



Upon reaching home Harue finds Grandmother crying on the seven tatami floor. "Oh! Harue I don't knw what I can do"

She tells Harue the Tax Collector came by and demanded seven yen for the unpaid house tax but she only had two yen saved in her wooden coin box.

The Tax Collector threatened "I will take your Harue as an indentured servant if the tax bill is not paid in full tomorrow when I return."

The Tax Collector was a man with evil eyes and filthy fat fingers for he collected money and children. Grandmother

Go Yen, A Story Beginning

heard the meow from the black cat that followed Harue home.

Grandmother sadly said “Harue you must understand we cannot afford to feed this stray cat. Why we can barely feed ourselves. The cat can stay the night but tomorrow you must take the cat back to wherever you found it.” A minute after midnight a black crow flew across the face of a full pale yellow moon.

The black cat leaped outside through Harue’s window but where the cat should have landed a ghostly image of the Lady in Waiting wearing a green and pink sleeping kimono stood or more correctly floated. The Lady in Waiting floated unseen above the gloomy moonlit marsh surrounding the Tax Collector’s residence and into his bare bedroom.

There was no creaking sounds of the wooden planks of the floor and the room temperature became cold a deathly cold. “Who are you to invade my bedroom? Don’t you know I am the Tax Collector an important employee of the Lord?” demanded the Tax Collector.

Swish was the last sound he ever heard as the cold steel blade cut through his neck and the head rolled, stopping against a night lamp. Next day the gossip in Haunted Blood Town was about how the Tax Collector had lost his head with blacken eye sockets and evil hands. His bloody mutilated headless body was found in a large locked money vault. The evil eyeballs were found one in each decapitated dirty hand.

A neighbor informed Grandmother and Harue of the violent death of the Tax Collector and that his ledger of

GO YEN

Go Yen, A Story Beginning

unpaid taxes was smeared black with the Tax Collector's blood, thereby, redacting all unpaid debts.



The Lady in Waiting

The skinny black cat purred around Harue's legs and then jumped up into Grandmother's lap, lying in her warmth.

Grandmother declared "The skinny black cat is a good luck charm. Harue please feed our honored house guest at once." Harue names the black cat Lucky as the black cat licked her front paws clean of the Tax collector's dried blood while sitting on a windowsill.

For reasons of her own Harue did not reveal the five yen bronze coin to Grandmother. After all a secret is a secret.

Years later when Harue grew up to be a young woman she would have a perfect oval face, with almond eyes, long neck framed by dark falling hair upon straight shoulders, a magic five yen bronze coin, a monk's journal, and a black cat from the Red Water Inn.



Go Yen, A Story Beginning

CHAPTER 9

TODOSHI AND THE BATTLE AT THEN NEVER ENDING SNAKE PIT

From age seven to fourteen Harue, Todoshi's journal, Lucky, and I, Go Yen were never separated but our reading times grew less and less. Grandmother could not do as much alterations and mending of clothes because she had difficulty threading a needle, so Harue took on more responsibilities. Harue had named the black cat from Red Water Inn Lucky. Lucky was the guardian of the house, hissing at smelly strangers at the door, and keeping grandmother's lap warm. Harue started a small enterprise in order to keep the household finances above water.

Neighbors realized Harue could always select the best value goods from Haunted Blood Town vendors, much to vendor's dismay, so neighbors would pay Harue to buy their

Go Yen, A Story Beginning

goods at vendor's alley. The Lady in Waiting, in the form of Lucky, was never far apart from Harue jumping from rooftop to rooftop as Harue went from vendor to vendor.

Seven times three years had gone by and at age seven times nine Todoshi still wandered up and down valley walls in the Shark Teeth Mountains. Todoshi avoided the trail to the fatal camp site near the Never ending Cave. At night when Todoshi heard the fluttering of wings of small birds, he would not flinch in fear but the memory of Teru Teru caused Todoshi to chant a prayer "All in life is temporary, fleeting, and fragile" with moistened eyes.

Since that dreadful day, Todoshi survived an occasional Ninja attack on, at least, seven occasions. Todoshi was on

the path of Whatever so the unexpected was expected.

Late one night while climbing up a steep rocky mountain trail Todoshi's left hand moved slowly along the cold moistened vertical craggy rock face. Suddenly he sensed a very slight but sudden disturbance-a



noticeable turbulence in the air. The air movement was from a different origin than the brisk breeze which

Go Yen, A Story Beginning

caused the sparse leaves clinging on vines to shudder. Within a split second in a clear focused way, Todoshi determined seven metal objects were flying toward him from seven different directions.

The ordinary person would only see a blurred motion and hear six clashes of metal on metal or metal against rock; six star shaped flying knives quickly tumbled in the air down the sheer mountain side. One flying knife passed through the six blocking movements of the long sword. Without thought, Todoshi repositioned his torso and the seventh flying knife became buried in his journal leaving a scar on the journal leather cover.

{The River}

Seven months later Todoshi sat at the edge of a rocky vertical craggy rock face that bottomed to a swift swirling blue river. The River God slammed powerful white waves against the black rock knuckles of the God of Earth Fire's fists. Across the seventy foot deep crevasse, dark green pine trees stood witness. Clouds of white mist rose above the churning whirling blue water. To the East the golden Sun God rose above the distant Pacific Ocean. The thundering noisy angry whirling water erased all other forest sounds.

Here was a perfect place for Todoshi to practice his open hand and open mind form of martial art. At the age of sixty-three Todoshi's arms and legs moved swiftly and slowly in a balanced form of a pink flamingo and enveloped in the thunderous sound of seven hundred locomotives. Both body and mind were flexible and extended beyond the space Todoshi's body occupied.

Go Yen, A Story Beginning

Remember to expect the unexpected, Todoshi sprang and somersaulted through the rising white mist and landed on the South side of the seventy foot deep gorge. Seven black ceramic finger size vessels of red poison gas fell and burst open within seven inches from where Todoshi had stood seven nanoseconds earlier. Todoshi barely saw a black blur climbing down the opposite face of the gorge into the rushing waves against the sharp jagged fingers of the Earth Fire God.

“Another one! I hope he did not drown and I wish him no ill will” without a second thought Todoshi bowed to the pine trees, river, and rising sun then restarted his journey toward the Never Ending Snake Pit along the deep gorge of Hebi River.



Down in the flatlands the river meandered and slithered through the fertile farms and littoral marshlands, finally, taking a bite out of the black sand beach before merging into the off shore swells of the Pacific Ocean. Villagers along the

Go Yen, A Story Beginning

river called it the Kawa Hebi or Snake River for obvious reasons or so it seems. The Ancients knew the river began at the Never Ending Snake Pit. The Master Monk had described how the Glacier God bled through and from an enormous empty vein of the Earth Fire God. And so Todoshi would eventually pass seven waterfalls and seven sacred pools of Hebi River to reach the Never Ending Snake Pit.

Between the fifth sacred waterfall and sixth sacred pool, the crisp blue Snake River flowed slowly, lapping on flat small pebble river edges. The clear cool water stood knee high. Here wading along the south shore, Todoshi heard the splashing, playing, and chasing of carp in the shallows around the next river bend.

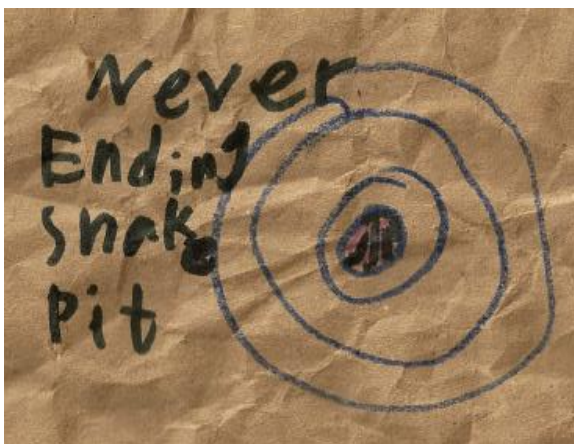
One huge alpha male bear stood on his rear legs and sniffed the air. The other bears, seven in all, stopped in the shallow water and also stood up and sniffed a human smell. For a moment no one moved. Only the Hebi River flowed slowly. Kuma, the huge alpha male approached Todoshi and sniffed Todoshi's face.

In the last twenty-five years it had become bear lore of how this monk and his heroic friend had dispersed a hunting party of seven bear trappers. The Clan of Whistling Bears now numbered seven hundred with Kuma as the alpha male.

Go Yen, A Story Beginning

Kuma bent down on his fore legs and quietly bowed his massive head until Kuma's black nose laid seven inches away from Todoshi's straw greenish yellow flip flops. Kuma's moist breath transformed into puffs of warm mist clouding over Todoshi's flip flops. Todoshi listened to the heavy breathing of Kuma without an ounce of fear. All seven bears in the water lowered their heads in Todoshi's direction and began a low growling which was not much different than monks chanting a prayer of gratitude of living.

Such a solemn scene! Todoshi bowed back in respect twice to



Kuma and once to the bears in the river then even a lower bow three times to all. As Todoshi continued his way to the Never Ending Snake Pit he would often see a solitary silhouette of a bear standing sentry on a ridge top.

Above the seven falls, Hebi River became a rivulet gently flowing clear and cold through ankle high dark green blades of grass. The noon sun turned the mountain air a little too warm and Todoshi stopped to wipe his brow. Beyond in the center of a Sandalwood forest circular clearing protruded the massive water worn concave shield-shaped stone. This enormous round structure laid seven hundred feet in diameter and stood at least seventy feet high in the center.

Go Yen, A Story Beginning

Since time was invented ancient glacier water had gurgled through this birth crevasse in a never ending flow.

The Never Ending Snake Pit was Nature's holiest of places.

Todoshi stood at the clearing edge and bowed not once, not twice, but three times. In his mind's eye flashed images of the Master Monk, his friend Teru Teru, Kuma the male alpha bear, and the fluttering wings of a swarm of small birds.

Ninja arrows!

Todoshi stepped behind a large Sandalwood trunk. Six arrows struck the opposite side of the trunk and another seven arrows stood feathers up in the dark green turf. By the time Todoshi counted up to seven arrows before deciding there were too many to count. Not enough time to estimate the number of Ninjas.

One small and short Ninja somersaulted through the dense dark undergrowth a dagger in one hand and a garrote clinched between his teeth. A tight vertical swift slice of Todoshi's long sword cut through the Ninja's brow and a lifeless black blur bumbled and tumbled into the clearing.

Suddenly Todoshi's ears were filled with a high pitch whistling the frequency almost beyond the human's hearing ability. Todoshi held his long sword ready as he changed to a defensive fighting posture to check out the fire and fury in the clearing.

The dark green clearing was filled with all shapes and sizes of bears. In the center Kuma, the alpha male, stood on his hind legs and growled his commands. The male bears

Go Yen, A Story Beginning

followed the scent trail of strange black outfitted humans up the six trees at the circular clearing edge. At Kuma's command a male bear climbed up each tree and the man scent grew stronger. With only one way up each Ninja began to sweat more and the scent of fear filled to nostrils of climbing bears.

As one bear fell mortally wounded seven more would climb and challenge the black clothed Ninja enemy. Finally the seven Ninja Agents who for twenty five years hunted Todoshi were all killed. The circus owner must have been very happy because he ended up with no one to pay. With their brute bear strength the Whistling bears had overwhelmed the six remaining Ninja Agents. Swift swipes of chisel hard bear claws and three inch long bear teeth just left a big freaking mess mass of reddish bones oozing pink marrow and bleeding red shredded body organ parts.

Kuma began a low rumbling growl as the surviving bears began eating blood stained human remains. The air was really skink really stink. You could hear the crunching of broken bones. But in a matter of hours the Never Ending Snake Pit clearing returned to its original holy state of dark green blades of grass and a clear and cold rivulet and the air again carried the scent of sandalwood. Small bear cubs were licking clean squeaky clean the blades of grass and adult bears all moaned a low growling as the lifeless bodies of bears were carried home, the Never Ending Cave.

Seven times three plus four years had passed then today Clan of Whistling Bears paid part of their forever debt to Todoshi seven times over. Todoshi and Kuma stood at the

Go Yen, A Story Beginning

bottom of the circular stone as the reddish Sun God settled in the West. And the sound of fluttering wings of tiny forest birds flying from tree to tree filled the air.

Todoshi sat cross legged and prayed in a solemn voice “All in life is temporary, fleeting, and fragile” for each fallen bear and ninja. So ends the Battle of the Never Ending Snake Pit the source of the Hebi River.

CHAPTER 10

TODOSHI’S TALES ON THE TRAIL



A VISIT TO HAUNTED BLOOD TOWN

From the Never Ending Snake Pit Todoshi decides to take a breather from life in the forest so he walks out to Haunted Blood Town. You can see Todoshi walking in the illustration of the Snake Bridge. He is walking away from the far end of the far side of the bridge.

“Good morning Sir. Good morning Madame” greeted each person he passed.

He checked out the town bulletin board for any temporary jobs because unlike life in the Shark Teeth Mountains you need cash in your pocket for food, drink, and shelter. Ah! Here is one to my liking posted by Yobushi the Fist owner of the Red Water Inn.

Go Yen, A Story Beginning

So Todoshi takes a turn to Obake Neko Street, greeting others, looking at various signs of stores, and finally knocking on the front door.

"Please enter. Each of our staff is more than happy to satisfy your desires" said the greeter

"Oh, no! Honored sir I am but a humble traveling monk applying for the posted helper position

"Oh, then you must enter through the servant's entrance and see the Boss man" instructed the Greeter.

As instructed Todoshi went through the plain bamboo gate in the back and sat cross legged on a low lying stone below the walkway around the bonsai garden and waited. He closed his eyelids and listened intently and heard the weight of a large person walking on the veranda.

"Good day sir, my Greeter informed me you want to work for me. Can I ask why?" said Yobushi.

"Ah, Boss man my stomach is empty and commands me to earn money for food and drink" replied Todoshi.

"Call me either Yobushi or Fist and you know I would feel honored to satisfy your worldly needs in return of work because a monk is an honored person in my world".

"My life is to learn and there is no better way than to work and prove one's worthiness in your world" replied Todoshi.

"That is an argument I cannot win so you can work here at my humble Red Water Inn. But first please sit here with me and be rested and fed before you are put to the menial labor of cleaning floors, dishes, chopping food and feeding the fire to keep the water boiling" Yobushi said.

Go Yen, A Story Beginning

During the following conversation Todoshi requested “If you don’t mind I wish to use the title Boss when I address you. I understand this is how other workers address you and I deserve no favor”.

“If that is your wish once again I cannot win that argument. Now eat and obey your belly’s command. Please accept this cup of sake I pour for you” Yobushi offered.

After sun set Yobushi guided Todoshi to the kitchen where the new dishwasher went to work washing rice bowls and small side dishes and chopping wood for the cooking ovens and hot water for bathing. The end of the working day was when all the work was done. Todoshi was shown to a small shelter and here he slept until the time someone describes earlier than early morning without any exaggeration.

{Respect}

First was the chopping wood and heating the ovens and sweeping the floors and there was all kinds as bare wooden floors, bare dirt with hay covered floors, plain straw matted floors, elegant straw matted floors, and blood and sweated matted floors in the gambling house.

The young supervisor got his job because of a frequent big time gambler had a sister-in-law who complained her good for nothing son had a thirty year old son who could not hold any job and was now unemployed. The big time gambler had a big time night in the Red Water Inn gambling hut so he proposed to Yobushi, instead of, paying a huge amount of winning to the big time gambler Yobushi could

Go Yen, A Story Beginning

give his sister-in-law's grandson a job and the big time gambler would gladly forego his winning of the night.

Of course the big time gambler encouraged the hiring by saying "This grandson is a good find and would be someone who Yobushi can depend upon"

There was no mention of the number of jobs he lost for some reason or another. Yobushi made a series of brain farts: he did not ask for job references; he had his greed for money overcome his business sense, as evident that his eyes grew wider at the mention of the big time proposal. A big time mistake of any gambler to give away your emotional state to the opponent gambler; and finally he did not take the time to think this through thoroughly to make a hiring decision.

Yobushi's response, in the moment, was an immediate "Yes. I can use someone to take over some of the daily supervision of the Red Water Inn"

In those days there was no such thing as a human resources division or company employee policy manual. And so the big time gambler's nephew became the supervisor of the Red Water Inn. Everything went well for the first couple of months during which the nephew brown nosed all those who held the next lower positions below his.

He would say "Oh no! You can do something else and I can do that for you" But he would always assign the work to another employee.

Eventually employees began to talk and complain among themselves about doing the actual work delegated by the new supervisor. When there is no human resources division

Go Yen, A Story Beginning

it is the employees that take up the task of straightening out any newly hired jerks. And the new supervisor was without a doubt a big time jerk of the seventh degree! In this process the other employees would never question Yobushi's decisions not because of retaliation but of their high degree of respect.

In slight of hand ways the employees would not follow the new supervisor instructions but do it in a way that he could not pick up that his idiotic and ignorant instructions were not being followed. But he would always take credit for the final result and when the result was junk he would naturally put the blame on others who sometimes were never part of the result.

{In A Gadda Da Vida}

Getting back to Todoshi's encounter with the supervisor, Todoshi was instructed to rake and weed the bonsai garden and take off all the dead leaves in the garden. While the young supervisor was so narcissistic and unaware of anything or person of good reputation, Yobushi knew of the travelling monk Todoshi's journey throughout Japan while finding himself and seeing the world beyond the gate of the Shark Teeth Mountain monastery . Yobushi while walking through the garden to ensure the gambling hut was ready for tonight, happened to observe Todoshi's excellent garden work.

Yobushi commended Todoshi "You have made the Red Water Inn garden far more than it used to be. More than being a thing of beauty, I feel the serenity and its greater value than the amount of money that comes into my pocket

Go Yen, A Story Beginning

each night. I thank you for reminding me to see what has a greater value to my life and others". Graciously Todoshi replied "As a young apprentice at the Shark Teeth Mountain Monastery, I would rake the garden daily for months on end which continued for what seemed unending decades. The Shark Teeth Mountain Monastery garden was especially known for a Golden Shower tree that each spring wore a bright yellow robe, like an apprentice monk's yellow robe. Throughout the month prior to blooming, the tree would shed its light green leaves, and then yellow flowers would bloom, eventually, whither into a earthly brown cluster and spiral down or an occasional wind would release a single yellow flower from the weakening grasp of its stem. The garden below the canopy would become a shag carpet of bright yellow and a sprinkle of earthly brown. From all parts of Japan visitors and poets would arrive during the full bloom of the Golden Shower tree. Monks, including myself, would meditate under its canopy while children would toss handfuls of bold yellow into the brisk beautiful breeze.

As I raked during every year, the bare shower tree would bloom, fragile flowers would fall, then the flower stems would fall, then small white pods of seeds would float in the breeze like hundreds of tiny white snowflakes searching for a new home in fertile soil, And during each phase I would rake and rake and rake. In the beginning raking was all-consuming of my youthful thoughts and energy. I used to think why do I need to rake and care for this tree, But eventually I felt the admiration of visitors and poets of this Golden Shower tree. I saw their smiles and tears and children sitting under the

Go Yen, A Story Beginning

canopy hoping to catch a falling yellow flower. Thus I began to seriously think of my raking,

My favorite rake was made of bamboo, It was light in weight and I could reach out and grab stuff way beyond my arm-length, effectively gathering stuff with its claws. The speed of my stroke would determine how far and how high the flowers would jump. The claws on both side were fine to dig-out stuff from crevasses. In essence I studied my tool. I would focus on my grip so it would not be too tight or not too loose. Ah! Such a surprising application of the Buddhist belief of following the Middle Path. After many repetitive movements; muscle memory took over and freed the mind to focus without really focusing. I know, sounds like a Kung Fu movie.

As I raked I observed living things at the verge at dying have different attitudes about the transition into the next phase. For the majority of leaves, flowers, stems, and branches they would not struggle and conformed when dumped into the bin. But some would not conform, clinging to the rake even if shaken violently. Others refused and would jump back onto the ground once again amongst their fellow yellow flowers, and others would still desperately cling to the top edge of the bin, confused on what to do next. After decades of performing this assigned task as an apprentice monk; I slowly began to understand the simple job I performed resembled the human existence of struggle between life and death.”

Go Yen, A Story Beginning

Yobushi the Fist bowed not once, not twice, but three times and walked away trying to grasp what was said while he continued his responsibility to inspect the gambling hut.

As Todoshi was putting the final touches to the garden by the raking sand surrounding the seven craggy moss covered rocks, the supervisor halted Todoshi and became very critical of Todoshi's hard work. So often the infected mind cannot see beauty or serenity in things around him. Not only having a blind eye but also having a blind mind is truly not a good thing, really not a good thing! So it happened by happen chance that the young supervisor came upon Todoshi raking the sand. While leaning against a veranda post, he flicked his cigarette ashes and finally his cigarette butt onto the white, raked sand, a few feet away.

"Hey you the bald headed monk you missed this spot! And you know it is a spot of great importance because all of the Red Water Inn paying customers are laying out good money here, not for some filthy and dirty garden but one rid of rubbish. But I suppose you cannot comprehend what I am saying since you are just one of many stupid and uneducated workers that found some incomprehensible way of getting hired by Yobushi. I would let you go if it was up to me and you would not be here cleaning toilets or sweeping dust off the tatami floor or whatever you do around here. Now clean up these ashes and butt before I tell you to pack up your nothings and take a walk and I mean a long walk out the rear door and if you don't think I would then, I will kick

Go Yen, A Story Beginning

your big monkey ass out of here” commanded the young supervisor.

All this time, Yobushi observed the supervisor’s actions and words while staring out of a gambling hut window. His brain was getting hot enough to boil the bathing water to the point of steam, transforming the furo (bathtub) to a sauna. At the last belching of the bad supervisor behavior and words, Yobushi yelled out from the gambling hut door and hurriedly strutted toward the supervisor smugly standing on the veranda and Todoshi standing with his rake about to clean up the supervisor’s ashes and cigarette butt

“What in the hell gives you the right to berate Todoshi. Who do you think you are? You were only hired because your uncle proposed that if I hired you he would forego his huge winning one night. Boy did I make the biggest mistake of my life hiring you. You impudent fool! How dare you scold a person who is learned of all knowledge you or I can ever comprehend to know and behave with that knowing the Way. But how can I ever expect you to understand what I meant! You fool you are no longer my employee and if ever your uncle wins again he can take winnings home and put in his bank. Now get out and never set foot in the Red Water Inn either as a customer or asking for another chance. Unlike money loss, trust in another cannot be easily gained again. So shut your dumbfounded excuse for a mouth and go! Right now, unless you really want to find out why I was giving the name Yobushi the Fist! “

And so the fired supervisor ran through the garden while a crowd of employees who had gathered during the

Go Yen, A Story Beginning

commotion stood and whispered to each other and some smiling while others had the facial expression of “Good riddance”

Yobushi approached Todoshi then apologized to Todoshi for having such a bad supervisor in charge. Yobushi, the Fist, bowed to Todoshi not once, not twice, but three times and who then spoke

Tofoshi said “ Sometimes in the Shark Teeth Mountains I would come upon a nice ripe wild tasty looking mountain apple and I would climb to that high hanging branch risking my life to pick that one singular fruit but at my first bite the tasty looking mountain apple turned out sour and unpleasant. One can never foresee the outcome of a personal choice. Therefore you have no need to apologize to me but if my observations during my stay are correct then you need to say something to the others who have dedicated to make the Red Water Inn the best inn in Haunted Blood Town. I humbly recommend you gather all the staff to sit on the u- shaped veranda surrounding the bonsai garden while I am out of sight.”

When all were present Yobushi informed the staff “I made the biggest mistake of my life hiring the good for nothing supervisor but made one of the best boss man decisions by firing his ass. You will not be seeing his presence around here anymore but if you do see him in our inn or outside near let me know I will take care the problem”

All the staff bowed not once, not twice, but three times first to Yobushi and then in the direction where Todoshi was hiding behind a corner of the inner inn. After seven

Go Yen, A Story Beginning

weeks of this stay in Haunted Blood Town, Todoshi decided it was once again time to step upon the path of whatever and return to the school of learning from the forest inhabitants as instructed by the Master Monk.

After all the satisfied guests and mostly disgruntled gamblers left and all dining and gambling rooms were wiped clean Yobushi and Todoshi shared a small blue bottle of sake and talked story before rolling out their bedding and putting out the candle.

“I remember the tremendous shaking of Haunted Blood Town and the spread of fires that leapt from building to building. The Red Water Inn suffered huge and expensive damage. Where we are sitting ended up as a pile of black charcoal and gray ash. I will admit that tears ran down my cheeks but the next day all of my staff showed up to rebuild the inn. No one asked about pay and no one asked what I wanted. Neighbors and clients all brought building material again while not asking for any kind of compensation then or in the future. From the tragedy of an earthquake in my life emerged an unexplainable connection to the people around me and the Red Water Inn. And so whenever I can and when I see the need for assistance by anyone more than before I am in front of the line to help.

I cannot say enough how good I feel when giving money away with any expectatons. And for me running a gambling house in the back, it must look strange and some would say I am some kind of fool.” With that said Yobushi sipped all sake from his empty cup. Todoshi pushed his kimono sleeve up and then leaned over and refilled Yobushi’s cup. “I am

Go Yen, A Story Beginning

*honored that you have shared a story and I am humbled.”
stated Todoshi.*

“Since your story was about the heat of fire, let me share my story of freezing ice. Long ago when I was privileged to stay as a guest in Yamasato village far to the north I decided to hike to the very northern tip of Japan. The head of the village made sure I had enough over clothes to keep me warm and utensils for making a camp fire. It was so cold that the exhaling of my breath fell to the snow covered ground at my feet. Ice would form at the bottom of my nose and ear lobes. At times I had thoughts of regret and cursed myself with words I am to shame to repeat. But in the end when I stood on the very North tip of Japan, I soaked in the magnificent view of the ocean and the moment erased all regret. In the slow moving dark and wind chopped waves, I saw blocks of ice at least seven hundred feet high and you could not see where the ice block began or ended. The scenery made me feel how insignificant I am in this world. I was an empty tea cup not even half full.

My reason for leaving the Shark Teeth Mountain monastery was to find myself and I had described to the Master Monk that I felt like a half full tea cup. The Master instructed me to journey through the Shark Teeth Mountains and observe the wild life creatures to find myself. But what I felt that cold day standing in front of a massive block of ice is that I am an empty tea cup. Yes not even half full but empty. I blame my feelings of having some great importance or maybe being above everyone, for my stating my tea cup

Go Yen, A Story Beginning

was even half full. I began to understand the word humility. For I am fragile, temporary in the matters of the world.” And with that Todoshi drank the last of the sake remaining in his cup.

“Well tomorrow is another working day for both of us and the sake bottle is empty so let us get a good night of sleep.” said Yobushi. And as Todoshi bowed and walked down the hallway to his room Yobushi thought to himself “My, no wonder everyone from the street lamp lighter to the lord of the castle speaks words honoring this monk’s reputation” as he laid his head on the headrest and closed his eyes.

For another seven times five years Todoshi would wander, observing the wild life, and learning of self in the Shark Teeth Mountains. He observed how the ants and termites form complex housing structures and societies. When Todoshi walked into the forest depths and heard the silence from baby and old dying trees, Todoshi witnesses their silent endurance and struggle to grow and thrive. He watched the Salmon struggling swimming upstream against the current and the fish’s perseverance against the angry white water. In the tall grass he saw field mice’s ingenuity cutting down slender soft blades of grass for bedding and underground outhouses. He made use of the natural alarm security system of groups of rice birds organized to give out warning to all nearby wildlife when danger approached. Todoshi recognized the family unity displayed by the Clan of Whispering Bears while passing the Never Ending Cave.

Todoshi saw human traits to build complex housing and societies, silent endurance, perseverance, family unity,

Go Yen, A Story Beginning cooperation among different species to survive, and ingenuity in the wildlife daily behavior.

During the cool of the early morning and late afternoon hours, Todoshi observed a party of Japanese Surveyors numbering seven working under the instructions of two Dutch mapmakers in the Shark Teeth Mountains. One Japanese Surveyor apprentice seemed well versed in the Dutch language as he yelled to his fellow Surveyor apprentice

“The line of sight is to the right and those three tall pine trees must come down.”

“For heaven sakes why must you disturb the nature and beauty of the Shark Teeth Mountains?” asked Todoshi.

The Japanese Surveyor apprentice replied “You see those two red haired foreigners? They are gathering measurements between mountain peaks throughout the length and breadth of our country. The foreigners have the magic to manipulate their measured numbers and map those numbers onto pure silk paper parchment. The Dutch were granted the Emperor’s command to accurately map the whole of the empire” then added “See that long pipe shape instrument on top of the three legged wooden stand? Looking through one end of the pipe you see the far away mountain peak in more detail and much larger than your normal eye view.”

Todoshi shook his head as he walked away and mumbled “I wonder if I could modify that instrument to obtain a better understanding of my soul?” Nah! The Master would slap my forehead not once, not twice, but three times if I did not

*Go Yen, A Story Beginning
observe the wild animals in the Shark Teeth Mountains in a
one-to-one basis. Shall my soul always feel half empty?"*

{Willow Weep for Me}

TALE OF THE KILLER TREE

Long ago it was a custom in a long forgotten village to plant a willow tree above the ground of a buried villager or visitor. In the dark and damp forest that erased any visible evidence of the village grew the roots and legend of the Killer tree. The story goes that the evil village leader was buried after execution by the village council of elders. The evil village leader once forced a mother to give away her beautiful daughter to a rice wholesaler so he could have a better price for his personal harvest of rice. Following the custom, a willow tree was planted over the dead village leader's grave. In the days, weeks, months, and years, the willow tree roots grew longer, first penetrating the dead body puncturing the decaying heart, lungs, and dried up vessels and arteries.

Go Yen, A Story Beginning

Killer tree.



Then smaller roots would enter the nose, ears, and eyes feeding on the nutrients remaining in the brain and eye balls. There was an evil still presiding in the corpse and that evil traveled through the willow tree's roots up the trunk and to the large branches spreading into the smaller fingerlike branches. Instead of having the weeping appearance for the dead, the tree from the size of a small sapling would scare forest inhabitants and hikers. While the deformed bumps and ridges on the tree trunk and branches began to develop a deformed devouring mouth from which black resin would ooze and an evil eye, the wind would be swirling around allowing the tree bony branches to grab nearby crawling insects, small animals and unknowing lost hikers. No bird dared to sit on any branch!

One day Todoshi, while struggling through a dark and damp and overgrown wild boar trail, came upon the Killer

Go Yen, A Story Beginning

tree. After growing seventy tree rings representing each of the seventy years and reaching a height of seventy feet a monk dressed as a ronin sat cross legged in front of the Killer tree. The tree burdened by the weight of dark green slender leaves appeared as a sadden man. Todoshi brushed a bunch of dried slender willow leaves off a bed of dried brown moss and sat crossed legged and enveloped by the smell of decaying leaves.

“I have heard your story of being planted on the grave of an evil man causing you to become evil yourself” said Todoshi.

Never mind what you might have expected but the truth is a tree cannot talk-even an evil willow tree with a deformed mouth on its trunk. Evil does not need to talk to be evil. So Todoshi answered his own questions.

For example, when he asked “Who are you?” Todoshi answered “Who am I?” And when he asked the Killer tree “Why do you kill innocent creatures of the forest?” Todoshi answered “Am I half full or half empty?” Todoshi breathed out slowly “I am both” The wind shook the long slender leaves brushing against Todoshi’s left shoulder slightly grasping his kimono before releasing its hold and yet Todoshi was still alive. Nothing evil had occurred. Was the story of the Killer tree just fake news?

Todoshi stood up, bowed to the tree reciting the prayer “All in life is temporary, fleeting, and fragile” seven times and continued the wild boar trail headed toward the lower slopes of the Shark Teeth Mountain. As Todoshi glanced back at the dark shadow of the Killer tree he asked himself “What did

GO YEN

Go Yen, A Story Beginning

I learn from this experience?" Ah! Though the story may be interesting and peaks your interest the story may be untrue. The story should be stacked in the fiction section at Barnes and Noble.

When Todoshi was far gone and all was silent a gust of wind moved through slender fingerlike branches of the Killer tree trapping and squeezing a squealing small rodent to its bloodless death. To balance the scale against evil, on the windward side of the Shark Teeth Mountains a good spirit tree grows. By all accounts this tree only speaks the truth when asked a question.

{Betty Davis Eyes}

{These Eyes}

THE TALE OF THE OWL TREE



The windward side faces the Northeast trade winds bringing a warm moist air promoting tropical trees like the Owl tree. A year after the battle of the Never Ending Cave Todoshi came face to face with the Owl tree. The tree. derives its name from the owl eye shapes on its trunk. Todoshi recalls the words of the Master Monk

Go Yen, A Story Beginning

“Todashi, travelers from the windward side of the Shark Teeth Mountains who stop by our monastery tell the story of an Owl tree. One old seller of ceramic ware told his story of asking the Owl tree why he lives beyond the lives of all of his family, including, his wife of seventy years and his seven sons and daughters.

The Owl tree replied “Life is suffering. The balance between life and death is so very fragile that there is no rhyme or reason why one lives or dies. The line between death and life is blurred by randomness.”

Todashi continued his walking in the direction of the flying geese to Thousand Sleeping Shipwrecks Golden Castle.

ENCOUNTERS IN THOUSAND SLEEPING SHIPWRECKS GOLDEN CASTLE

He pondered the page of his learning from the Owl Tree but kept striding toward the great commercial fishing city built on the great arcing bay just south of the high sea cliffs upon which sat the Thousand Sleeping Shipwrecks Golden Castle. Todashi took off his flip flops and squeezed the black sand between his creased toes. Though he tried his best to trim his toenails it was next to impossible. He turned his face into the crisp cold sea smelling breeze cutting across the bay waters. Further down he could make out with his naked eye the multitudes of fishing boats of all sizes and colors, green,

Go Yen, A Story Beginning

red, blue, and white. There were larger commercial ships sailing into the calmer waters ready to sell its cargo of Chinese silk, Korean dried fruits and kim chee, and South Asia spices, such as, Indian cury powder.

“My! Such a sight after living in the mountains for so long” said to himself.

In his on-going easy going fashion Todoshi greeted the strangers met along the way. He always inquired if anyone knew where he could find all type of menial temporary employment. One stranger also walking toward town said follow me my neighbor is a tailor who is needs help with his wife being in a sickly way. I believe he could not offer much except room and board.

“How can one resist an opportunity to help a fellow human being” answered the travelling monk.

The Tailor and Todoshi exchanged respectful bows while both heard the continuous coughing from the back bedroom.

“Sir, during my studies at the Shark Teeth Mountain monastery the monks learned many life skills including sewing our own attire from everyday wear to the more elaborate ceremonial robes. Though I cannot rise to your level to sewing such garments I see hanging behind you I would be able to cut the more simple patterns, sew on buttons, sew together sashes, soak and press bolts of fabric so you could devote your time to taking care of your wife until she is able to once again contribute. I can also cook and keep the house in order since those were part of my daily task at the monastery” offered Todoshi.

Go Yen, A Story Beginning

The Tailor explained he could not offer much above room and board and with both agreed. "Now before I show you to your bedding I would like you to meet my wife"

"Wife, excuse such a late night interruption but I want you to introduce you to Todoshi who will help us through this difficult period"

Todoshi added "It is my honor to provide any assistance" and then parted ways finding his bedding.

The next morning before anyone else woke up Todoshi started cooking a morning meal for the Tailor and wife while also organizing and cleaning the cooking area. He went to the community well and greeted the wives and children who were also assigned to gather water for the day's use. He made his favorite monk's bread loaf and hot tea flavored with wild mint he had picked during his walk along the forest trail.

"Good morning to you and your wife. I hope you find the meager morning meal to your liking. I also prepared a side offering that might help ease the coughing. It comes from an old travelling Samurai doctor who often visited the monastery to relax and teach simple remedies"

She coughed and expressed her gratitude.

The first work went fast and the Tailor was more than pleased and not once did a task have to be undone and redone. After the last customer order was taken the front door was shuttered close. The Tailor went to the back bedroom providing care to his wife. Todoshi organized and cleaned the front customer area where they chose the material, measurements were taken, and dates of completed attire would be ready for customer pick up. That first day and

Go Yen, A Story Beginning

every first day of the week he would clean the front exterior of the Tailor shop knowing a clean and inviting front would always beckon people off the busy street. After taking care of the front Todoshi went to the kitchen area and prepared the week meal plan in order to purchase the right amount of ingredients and not waste any part of a vegetable or fish.

The Tailor had earlier given Todoshi a list of food vendors he had accounts with. He would also supplement the purchased items with fish caught along the shoreline and egg gathering and natural remedy excursions into surrounding woods. Every night meal was not one to be complained about. Neighbors who would catch a whiff from Todoshi's cooking box would wonder how they could get a taste. On Sundays a day the Tailor and wife spent together in private Todoshi explored Thousand Sleeping Shipwrecks Golden Castle and as a travelling monk was granted a meeting with the castle lord. Though each encounter was brief each came away enriched by the wisdom of the conversation.

"So I am so fortunate to finally meet the famous travelling monk who fought with my friend Teru Teru the great Lord of the Lake of Love Blood. How is my friend the Master Monk of the Shark Teeth Mountains doing? Though I have heard of your journey on the path of Whatever can you tell me in your own words the adventures you have?"

Todoshi decided to obey the Lord's questions before informing the Lord of the overheard secret plot to overthrow the Lord's fiefdom and so Todoshi said "My original quest departing the monastery many moons ago began with self-

Go Yen, A Story Beginning

doubt. I could not find value pending the short time of my existence. I described to my Master feeling half empty and he first answered maybe it is because you are already half full. His explicit instructions were to observe to behavior of the forest inhabitants and that is what I have dedicated my journey to except when I feel the need for human companionship for what are we but another paragraph in each other's stories.

From ants to bears, from the killer tree to most recently the owl tree I have sat and observed. Sometimes there were no difference between and up and down except for the pull of the earth god trying to grab down the weight of my body into its mouth. Though the nature of men is at times more complex than the number of stars at night, the nature of man is yet at times as simple as a spider's web. The forest is a school for all to learn from but one cannot neglect what can be learned from the people."

Todoshi offered the following strange encounter. When Todoshi departed the northern shore of Lake of Love Blood he left with a heavy burden on his shoulder. It was the knowledge of a secret plot to overthrow the Thousand Sleeping Shipwreck Golden Castle.

A small remnant of survivors of the Bear and Shark stomps the Spider Battle met every so often through the generations since the war to grieve and gripe over their financial losses and lower samurai status. For the longest time the question was who to blame. Though the Bear Clan of the Castle of Lake of Love Blood was the major victor the

Go Yen, A Story Beginning

argument was better to squash the Shark Clan being the Thousand Sleeping Shipwreck Golden Castle for they had a smaller land force and more importantly being a sea commercial port a small contingent of strangers would go unnoticed. They decided having no army or cache of weapons their strategy would be terrorism.

Only a small number of terrorists were needed to create fear in the minds of inhabitants and spread falsehoods from house to house from shop to shop and from ship to ship. Not in big lies but a gradual taste of lies and false representations of the truths. Divide and conquer! FAKE NEWS! While camping out on the northeastern shore of Lake of Love Blood Todoshi was approached by a straggly short stranger.

The smelly small man by stature appeared to be somewhat of a part-time fisherman and part-time scavenger of thrown away junk. He walked over to Todoshi's campfire.

"Hello Sir can I sit next to your fire and get warm?" asked the small stranger.

"Please accommodate yourself and I can share the small amount of food I prepared for dinner" invited compassionate Todoshi.

After a bunch of small talk about the weather and good fishing spots, Todoshi became aware of some bad blood lying just beneath the conversation. Such hints were comments like

"The life of my ancestors changed after the Bear and Shark stomps the Spider war, Scrounging for food was never

Go Yen, A Story Beginning

a problem a long time ago. But now like the few survivors of my clan, we live a day to day existence not knowing where the next meal will come from. The truth is, I hold no ill will against the Bear and Shark clans and as you see I hold no weapons to fight and kill.” offered the straggly, scheming small stranger.

“Bad karma will follow the bad decisions made by others.” grunted Todoshi. Todoshi leaned backwards and crossed both his arms relaxed showing unconscious notions of rejection of the conspirator’s words.

”I hear often in the Thousand Sleeping Shipwreck Golden Castle they ship a bunch of gold bars to China, in order to, hide their wealth from the people and as they say the rich get richer as the poor get poorer. The people are out of the loop both in truth and wealth. I have met with some people who are disgusted by those who live in the comfortable castle and getting fat and lazy. With all the riches being sent to China, roads and piers don’t get fixed or upgraded. Such a shame since the people work so damn hard for so little compensation and comfort! A pity that the people who bow to the inhabitants of the castle don’t have means to make their lives better and the inhabitants of the castle prefer to have no idea how the people suffer. They cannot hear the whispers of neighbor to neighbor while the rich play games inside the high castle walls. They prefer to be ignorant of the people suffering. And beyond gold and jewel the Lord craves absolute power over all. Too bad for the people I say.”
rumored the small straggly stranger. There was no basis of facts just words to ignite a fire inciting the crowd.

Go Yen, A Story Beginning

Todoshi offered his sympathy and just nodded to give a sign that what was just said was the truth. "I thank you for the warmth and meal that has filled my shrinking stomach. I would like to stay but I must continue my spreading of the truth. I go North toward the Thousand Sleeping Shipwreck Golden Castle but in a different route than yours and I will travel slower since I scatter seeds of the truth amongst the people as I shared with you" said the stranger.

Only after the crunching of footsteps over dried brown leaves became silent did Todoshi eyelids completely closed and he sighed "What a trippy man".

"What a strange stranger and even more, such a strange conversation." were the first words of the next day as Todoshi walked North with a wary eye for any sign of the stranger. He rather turned his thoughts to his upcoming stay at Thousand Sleeping Shipwreck Golden Castle.

The Lord pointed to a scroll that held an important place among other scrolls. "Long ago when the original settlers of the town came upon this arcing bay they took a vote for choosing a pair of boy and girl who at their early age displayed a sense of fair play, kindness, hard work, good judgement, and humility. There was no noble blood flowing in the veins of my ancestors. It was always understood no one would be greater than any other and that is the foundation upon which this castle was built. Thank you for sharing the strange stuff. I will make doubly sure the people who put my family in the castle are well acquainted with the truth of any falsehoods about off shore wealth in China. I will

Go Yen, A Story Beginning

use the truth to combat any form of falsehood, instead of, raising the sword. In the mean time I hear you are working for the Tailor. You could not find a better family to house with especially since the Tailor's wife is not feeling well. I am glad for both you. I hear you are skilled in the game of Go and would like to play a match with you" stated the Lord and so the night went on until each both declared the game to be a draw.

After seven weeks amongst people Todoshi felt the itch to once again go and observe the inhabitants of the Shark Teeth Mountains away from the secret sinister strangers who spread untruths to gain control of the people's minds. And so the following stories are encounters Todoshi had to find himself.

TALE OF THE MARTEN

Having hiked the route of the geese here Todoshi stood where the alpine spine of the Shark Teeth Mountains started to writher and slither north along the route of geese. Each inhale chilled his chattering teeth and the saliva on his tongue changed into frost and each exhale was a white cloud of moisture. Looking back the dark green shadowy tree line came to a halt and the landscape turned in a sloping black and red lava field covered with white snow patches, facing to the West Todoshi saw the Sea of Japan, a mix of white thorny caps amongst waves ranging of heights

Go Yen, A Story Beginning

to seventeen feet and ice floes floating like clusters of white water lilies bobbing in a Monet pond. Toward the East the scenery was the rising warm morning orange sun turning the reddish volcanic cones fiery red and the snow covered ground and glacier into an orange blanket and ribbon.

“My! Such a moment as this is worth living for” He could see the isolated village to the North and decided to visit its residents. Todoshi grabbed his walking stick started on a downward on zig zagging path of brown and red pumice crushed flat by the pounding feet of men and animals. At one point above the left slope of the path, a heavy white ledge of ice was covered with seven months of snow. Todoshi was still entranced by the wonderful wintery scene of glaciers and trees covered by snow so he often paused to pray.

An old woman approached wearing a flattened cone shaped straw hat and a mat of straw over her bent bow shape back. Todoshi had seen her progress up the same path he was on. She wore layers of thick crudely woven cloth testifying that she was not from the city but from the country. Her hands and face were weathered the wrinkled skin dried and sunburned. She used a shorten walking stick for she could not have been over five feet tall and because of the curvature of her spine, due to, carrying heavy loads all of her life. Her fingers were curled up in a tight ball from the repetitive work of farming. But for all the stuff conveying her long life, her eyes sparkled like diamonds and yet you could sense something dark about her.

“A good morning to you, may I offer you a prayer” offered Todoshi.

Go Yen, A Story Beginning

“What are you doing here?” in a youthful voice replied the old woman.

“I am on the path of Whatever and just admiring such a wonderful moment. If you have the time I would be willing to start a camp fire and heat up a kettle of Chinese tea”

Todoshi answered.

“Yes that would be nice to warm my inners kind sir” answered the old woman.

As the ice in the teapot heated to a boil the rising heat of the fire camp rose to the overhanging ice ledge above Todoshi and the old woman. While waiting Todoshi and the old woman exchanged conversation about why and where she was hiking up in such cold weather. Todoshi heard ice cracking. In a swift motion Todoshi grabbed the old woman and carried her down the trail to a safe point seven hundred feet away from the crushing ice shelf. He loosened her hold and gradually sat her on a dead tree trunk lying next to the path. When he glanced upward he heard a loud boom and saw the falling white cloud avalanche sliding with a deathly roar covering the possessions he had to leave in order to save the old woman.

“My goodness that was such stupidity on my part to start a fire beneath an ice ledge” Todoshi apologized as he turned to face the old woman.

She was not there! From where she sat a trail of animal tracks led off the footpath and seventy feet away Todoshi saw the dark brown Marten with a crème colored chest standing a foot and half tall looking back at Todoshi.

Go Yen, A Story Beginning

Todoshi scratched his bald head and smiled. "I wonder if the shape shifting marten wanted the avalanche to bury me or was I rescued from an icy death" From deep in the dark of trees, the forest shook as a cold windy gust carried the laughter of a rascal old woman. Todoshi thought part of Japanese folklore is the Marten has nine different disguises to wear and fool humans.

Perhaps even humans wear multiple disguises to fool the unsuspecting for either good or bad intentions. Someone can put on a smile while being sad or angry. Someone can act to help you while stealing your money. With one less disguise the Tanuki or Raccoon dog has only eight different disguises but still is a shift shaper.

VISIT TO YAMASATO VILLAGE

"My goodness the beauty and serenity of this land is beyond the words I have been taught" Todoshi said and gazed at the high slithering spine of the Shark Teeth Mountains plunging its North ending head biting into the dark and gray skin of the Pacific Ocean.

Wow!" exclaimed the traveling Monk. His shout out echoed not once, not twice, but three times.

Todoshi saw white snow covered peaks, white and blue tinted glaciers, dark green trees just below the white snow covered ground, the small patches of rice pads and vegetable gardens surrounding a canopy of a cluster of trees standing above a blue bunch of farmers' thatched dwellings and bluish farmers and children. Todoshi had heard stories

Go Yen, A Story Beginning

about trees that turn all colors below the canopy of a variety of bluish shades. But to see in person such an amazing wonder would make anyone rub the eyes or clean their eye glasses just to make sure this was not their imagination.

During his descent Todoshi crossed a number of small foot bridges partly covered by human foot prints or small paw prints impressed upon the white crust of previous snowfalls. On occasion Todoshi greeted a sole farmer or hunter

“You seem dressed for such cold weather unlike me who does not bear the skill or tools to make such fine snow wear. I admire how your attire made from straw keeps the snowflakes from reaching the skin beneath.”

“Ump!” said the approaching stranger

“Why I only know what I know but you sir by your appearance know what you know but also what others have written down and lectured. A treasure throve between such big hanging ears” said the laughing stranger.

And Todoshi laughed the loudest. “But still all my knowledge does not warm my flesh from the falling snow” exchanged the travelling monk rubbing his hands together.

“I have a small hut not far away just past this bridge. Though the hut is small the cooking box is big and the hanging pot is big too filled with boar meat and vegetable broth. Please let me share the broth and warmth and perhaps you might tell me whatever current events have occurred beyond these white capped Shark Teeth” offered the stranger.

Go Yen, A Story Beginning

“You must have read a book ‘The Fart of the Meal’ but I accept the terms because my stomach will receive more nourishment than news I can pass on” laughed Todoshi.

The stranger smiled “Any news is better than previous older ones!”

And so Todoshi spent a day and night in the stranger’s thatched hut while the wind grew colder and stronger. They slept on thick mattresses filled with dried rice stalks as fine as bed futons filled with duck feathers. In the morning Todoshi started the fire cooking box, hung a kettle of cold melted snow and added his mixture of monk’s secret ingredients to share with the stranger.

After the morning tea, Todoshi went outside and erected his small praying stone, kneeled in front and chanted seven times “All in life is temporary, fleeting, and fragile” as the stranger watched from the door of the thatched hut.

“I have never met a wiser wanderer in my entire lifetime. Though your attire does not give a clue, Have you studied for a monk’s life in the past. Because you appear to be more than the ordinary traveller?” questioned the stranger.

“Yes, I left the Shark Teeth Mountain Monastery what seems like seven life cycles ago to find myself and see the world. Anyways, I limited my travels to that part of the world where I did not need to get on a big boat. The Master Monk’s instructions were to observe the forest inhabitants to learn the nature of man. Ah! There were times I could stretch my arms to reach the opposite valley walls. I ,even, met the Clan of Whistling Bears, met the Killer tree and Owl Tree, but I lost a true samurai hero who had only one arm, one eye,

Go Yen, A Story Beginning

*killed by a small flying bird chirping arrow” answered
Todoshi.*

*Having listened to many stories passed on over many
camp fires, the stranger was no stranger to such a tale. He
whispered in a quiet breath*

*“Such honor you have brought to my small and humblest
hut. You cannot be the same monk described as stupid and
weak mentioned in the legend of saving the Clan of
Whispering Bears” He then again bowed not once, not twice,
but three times. Todoshi confessed for the first time since
losing his friend Teru Teru*

*“Even called stupid and weak, I do not deserve such high
honors because the blood drops of my friend stained the trail
from the Never Ending Cave up and down to Haunted Blood
Town. Because I lost a true friend, I take no comfort knowing
the Clan of Whispering Bears is not part of a circus
sideshow. I greatly mourn the temporary, fragile and fleeting
life of Teru Teru”*

*“My! You are more humble than the small bee that
pollinates every grain, flower, fruit and vegetable plant we
survive on” said the grateful, gnomish stranger. “Now tell me
your story so I can include it into my travel journal.” Said
Todoshi.*

*Well where should I begin? I was once a farmer and my
family lived in Yamasato Village up north. One year long ago
the bandits raided the village killed my son and kidnapped
my wife. From that day I was not able to function and my
only thoughts were of revenge. I had no killing instincts other
than my hunting skills to provide meat for my family and*

Go Yen, A Story Beginning

friends. I had developed good enough tracking skills to track the clumsy cowards who pick on hard working farmers. I found my wife was abused and killed so eventually I killed the leader and a couple more. I hung their corpses just outside the bandits' camp, blood draining like all my other kills of pigs and deer. Ever since when staring straight at someone or something, I see tiny flashes of blue sparks in my peripheral vision. I came to believe these were the spirits of my son and wife. Though my awake time was tormenting my soul, on occasion I would dream of epic journeys not in the dense forest of Shark Teeth Mountains but I would be wandering on the greenness grass laid upon the rolling hills and ridgelines along a silent coastline. I could walk a thousand miles and more, strolling through a green sea of waving blades of grass. I remember not one piece of rock or stone would I come upon. Each square inch of ground was green grass. Nor did I see any cows, goats, deer, or pigs eating this grass which I thought would fill these hungry stomachs. In one escape of reality, I climbed up a slope and entered a small cave entrance then stood, in wonder seeing different lighted color glass globes sitting in the walls. I took in their beauty but did not and still do not understand their meanings. To me the cave was not my final destination of my epic journeys because I continued to have such dreams after the cave dream. Feeling burdens which I could never shed as a member of the village, I left. And that is why I came to live alone outside the village but I do share my meat with them. After all, I could not eat a whole pig or deer by myself. That is my story. "said the hunter.

Go Yen, A Story Beginning

"Tomorrow I must continue my travel in the opposite direction of your journey, for I climb the mountain side looking for forest creatures that will provide protein into the Yamasato Villagers' diet. But I will speak of our conversations in this smallest of small thatched hut to my children and their children. Now you are a chapter of my life." informed the stranger.

Todoshi took out a small pouch of monk's tea mixture and laid the pouch in front the stranger

"Please allow me to share this tea. It is said to invigorate the drinker, energizing both physical quickness and focus which are the most important attributes of an excellent hunter".

The thatched door opened to far better weather. No sharp biting winter wind and the air was so clear one could see the mouth of the Kawa Hebi or Snake River. This time they shook each other hands instead of performing bows which were giving each a lower back pain. Walking over seven more foot bridges in the white and cold maze of small valleys, Todoshi finally reached the flat farmable patches of ground.

Todoshi took in the canopy of magic trees turning a rainbow of colors to tints of blue. Strangers bowed as they hurried to working in the rice fields. I wonder how different blue rice tastes compared to the reddish tinted rice of Lake of Love Blood. He scratched his overgrown beard then rubbed the top of his head in total amazement. Totally a

Go Yen, A Story Beginning

Wow visual experience! He stood near enough to stick his arm under the nearest canopy and watched his fore arm turn blue. He turned his palm up and saw his blue palm. Even the dirt under the fingernails had turned a dark blue. An Elderly farmer whose back was bent over from years of hard and manual labor approached. Todoshi introduced himself.

“Good morning and welcome to Yamasato village. Call me Yama, my shorter and informal name. It has been quite a while since we had a visitor. May I inquire where you came from and what is your final destination? Of course I respect your right to privacy and the absence of answers will not prohibit any form of hospitality from the village” said the Elderly one.

“Long ago a friend and I went on an adventure to prevent Bear trappers from caging the bear clan for a greedy circus owner and his sideshow. My friend died and I have been wandering amongst the trees and trails of the Shark Teeth Mountains. My home, for more than half my life, was the Buddhist Monastery sitting above the Lake of Love Blood. My quest has been to observe the inhabitants of the forest in order to find my inner self or the nature of men. I walk on the path of Whatever so each turn of the trail brings a surprise and life lesson.”

“This is the short version describing years of wandering” said Todoshi.

“Please forgive my bad manners while you must be in need of a meal and a hot bath. Not that you smell but I can feel the wear and tear of your body. Please accompany me to my dwelling, I can offer you a tray of small plates of fresh

Go Yen, A Story Beginning

vegetables, firm fleshed wild salmon salted to your taste, bowls of our blue tea and blue rice topped with blue ume the tastiest homemade salted plum. Believe me it will take days before you get comfortable eating blue everything while sitting under a blue thatched roof. The Elder showed Todoshi his bedding area and gave a set of towels and bar of blue bath soap bought only for such special guest. Todoshi followed the Elder to the community outhouse and bathing tub called furo hut which offered a place of personal privacy. While Todoshi was doing his thing, the Elder began cooking blue miso soup with blue green onion sliced into small bits, tiny squares of blue tofu, rice, sliced up mustard cabbage, short stubs of cucumber, salted boiled edamame, kicked off with miso salmon caught only yesterday by another villager. Everything was blue!

Being mid-day, other villagers were still out in the field so Todoshi had a luxurious time soaking in the hot furo bath tub. An elderly woman walked in and said she would scrub his back. Todoshi blushed and said "Please no need to occupy yourself to do that." Her reply was "Nonsense! It is my pleasure and I have seven children so I have seen everything a man has ". He had forgotten what it felt to be clean on clean. Todoshi borrowed a shaving kit to trim his beard and mustache. And trimmed his hair then pulled it into a presentable ponytail. He used some warm water and monastery vegan tooth paste with his finger to cleanse his teeth and mixed some ground mint leaves with water to freshen the mouth anticipating the meal to follow. In

Go Yen, A Story Beginning

exchange for his own kimono and undergarment was a set of fresh clothing. The elderly lady said “ These should fit you are about the same size as my seventh son, I will throw your things in the wash tub.”

What can I contribute to the meal? Todoshi asked himself and pondered this question forming five creases on his forehead.

I will make a loaf of monk’s bread. And so he got decently dressed and gathered his cooking ingredients, bowl, and utensils from his carrying pack and went to the community clay outdoor oven. Within a short distance, women in the field stopped their weeding and stood up straight raising a hand to block the sun glare and whispering to next village woman who continued the process until all had stopped working, all stood looking in Todoshi’s direction wondering who the visitor was and what was in their oven.

Then the Elder looked out of his thatched hut and knew it was the proper time to now introduce Todoshi to everyone before they chased the stranger out of Dodge City. After the first seven introductions Todoshi attempted to shake hands but each time the recipient would apologize for having soiled hands and continue the long honored practice of bowing. That first night only the Elder and Todoshi ate the night meal together and yes every item was some tint of blue. Todoshi thought, this takes a while to getting used to. The following days and nights were spent working beside the villagers as well as eating the fruit of their labor.

One night the hunter he had previously met, dropped by and unloaded a deer for the village protein. He acclaimed

Go Yen, A Story Beginning

the wise words of the travelling monk but Todoshi shook his head and waved his hands rejecting such praise and laughed out loud at the thought of such foolishness. The call of the journey beckoned Todoshi one moment while cleaning a stick gobo, a brown tuber fleshy root, and so he began walking around the village thanking each one including the small kids who he made small trinkets the monastery would give out to children after the Sunday services. The morning air was pure. A pure blue. And the sky outside the tree canopy a shade of real blue, then stepping outside the tree canopy the world became a full spectrum of colors. Primary colors of red, blue, and yellow and all the colors between.

Todoshi returned to a normal palette of colors, once again seeing green fields, meadow highlands sprinkled with blossoms of wild flowers, a foreboding dark green forest tree line, and white capped mountains. He said to himself "This visit has made me more appreciative of the colors of my surroundings. He wondered what would be the next surprise on his path of Whatever. Would it be big or small? Well size does not matter only the adventure does.

TALE OF THE RACCOON DOG

Deep in the Shark Teeth Mountains, Todoshi sat cross legged in front of the short ancient praying stone, oblong weather basalt water worn, and lichen covered gray stone. It stood a foot tall weighed about seven pounds and did not resemble a straight standing human though the prayer could

Go Yen, A Story Beginning

only see a resemblance of human form. It had no face, limbs, or ears. Todoshi sat still and silent living in one moment, meaning not think of the past and not wondering of the next.

“Hey old man you pray for me to, huh?” said a huge man who stood about seven feet and seven inches tall.

Dressed in tattered clothes of a forest robber he stared down at Todoshi’s offering of rice and dried fish to the Gods.

“Eh! I can make better use of the food you offer to the Gods. And I can give you a more immediate answer to your prayers. I can give you the chance to continue breathing another day. What is better than that can you pray for?” said the giant of a man.

“Here please accept my bundle of food which is much more than the meager offering lying on the ground” replied Todoshi.

“Are you thirsty? I have a flask of spring water that would quench a huge man like you without a doubt. My, it must be a constant struggle for you to keep being satisfied with each passing day” added Todoshi.

The gnarly, goliath giant bent over to helping himself to the bundle and flask shoving food into a monster munching mouth exposing many missing teeth followed by swift swallows of spring water. Every crumb and drop was consumed consequently demanding more.

“You better believe if you decide to use that sword against me I tell you I can easily bend the blade around your skinny small neck!” exclaimed the thief.

Go Yen, A Story Beginning

"I have no inclinations to fight. I would rather become a friend. We together can support each other by telling stories over a cold night campfire" Todoshi offered.

There began a change from an angry and frowning face to one of questioning to asking for forgiveness. The gap between the two became closer and a bridge was being built between Todoshi and the giant.

"My name is Todoshi and I am monk wandering on the path of Whatever seeking to see the world and discover who I am. What is your name young man?" inquired Todoshi.

"I have no name. I have no mother or father. The closest to a name is Okii as you can observe has to do with my size. I have always being too big for my age. No family would want to be obligated to feed a child with big appetite. The only people I know are the thieves and assassins for hire living and lurking in the Shark Teeth Mountains. I found myself able to hold my own amongst those who got along in a life governed by creating fear. Big fear comes easy for me." said Okii.

"My! You and I come from very different worlds!" an astonished Todoshi said.

"I originally come from a noble family but was not happy by being raised without any wants for I was given everything I demanded as a child" Todoshi said as he flashed back to his childhood.

"One day I decided I did not know who I am even though I had a name and parents, so I left the comfort of living in the

Go Yen, A Story Beginning

castle and became an apprentice monk at the Shark Teeth Mountain monastery. But even then I was not able to answer the question :who am I?”.And I later changed my monk robe for a poor ronin’s kimono and straw flip flops”

“I appreciate how honest and truthful you are so I will be the same with you” said Okii.

The forest robber all seven feet and seven inches of him climbed a nearby vertical trunk of a tree so high Todoshi lost sight of the big man. Down the same tree trunk came an oversized tanuki or raccoon dog. It jumped down to the ground and gave Todoshi a smile and a friendly wag of its tail.

Todoshi smiled back laughing to himself “Another forest shape shifting dweller one can never know who is who when one hikes in the Shark Teeth Mountains.

{Dog and Butterfly}

TALE OF THE BUTTERFLY

This morning while sitting and waiting for water to boil Todoshi watched a green caterpillar slowly climb upside down on a low hanging branch. The plump, flexible insect nudged its way forward by hunching its middle portion in a downward curve while its back side pushed the whole body upward and forward. The green caterpillar stopped at each soft leaf on the branch until it changed into a very plump green caterpillar.

From its mouth it began to spew a white sticky, silky, and slender substance attaching its fat body to the underside of

Go Yen, A Story Beginning

the branch. As the green caterpillar hung, it contorted its green body until the green body was covered by the white silk thread into a protective cocoon, a peanut shaped shield against bad weather and bad birds and other bad insects.

Todoshi hears the whistling of a hot tea pot. Ah! He takes a moment to give thanks to the fire that magically gave up some of its energy to the tea pot which then gave up energy to the water and now the tea is immersed into the excited hot water.

“And now I will enjoy the energy that warms my stomach” After the first sip Todoshi empties his mind of the past and future and senses there is a teaching here by observing Mister Green caterpillar. He cannot give verbal instructions but I can learn from Mister Green caterpillar behavior.

Todoshi raises both his hands to his head and his clenched fists explode out and while his fingers are stretched outward he exclaimed “Poooooosh!” like his head is exploding. And so Todoshi patiently camps out for the next seven days focusing his attention upon the white cocoon.

On the seventh day Todoshi sees a gradual breaking up of the white cocoon and sees the Mother Nature’s magic of the transformation. No longer a green caterpillar, the magic changed to a different shape with antennae and brilliant purple and yellow wings. In the first moments, the wings are fluttering in the wind so the nutrient fluid, which it fed on during the last seven days and remained on the wings, became dry and began to spread out showing its brilliant pattern of colors on wings and body.

The obvious question arose as Todoshi whispered to his self “Do humans go through a similar transformational change? Will I?”

In some ways creatures of the forest are much more superior to humans. We are only another creature existing beyond the edge of the forest. With this emerging, thought Todoshi did not consider the last seven days watching Mister Green caterpillar a wasted week. As Todoshi joined his hands as part of his meditation posture, Mister purple and yellow butterfly landed on his thumb.

We all share the magic ingredient of transforming, thought Todoshi as Mister purple and yellow butterfly caught an upward gust of breeze disappearing into the blue sky above the tree tops.

LAYING EGGS AND FEEDING FISH

In a spot of green short grass, surrounded by a forest and smooth water worn boulders, Todoshi sat on the bank of a small valley stream and observed the airspace above the seven feet wide rippling water surface, above the green and gray streambed of water worn pebbles. He listened to the constant buzzing noise from numerous flying insects. The flying insects named Monkagero flew upon the tall green growth growing in the shallow stream. He watched the flying insects land and cling to the undersides of the leaves; then in a matter of seconds drop three to four thousands eggs into the water surface.

Go Yen, A Story Beginning

After a lifespan of twenty-four hours expending all its energy laying the eggs, the flying insects dropped onto the rippling slow circular swirling currents and were devoured by the school of fish waiting patiently; knowing this birth and dying process fulfilled the fishes' appetite. The eggs are hatched underwater some are eaten but many would survive their first phase underwater until they are ready to crawl onto dry land and transform into a flying insect.

"My! Such fleeting life and such a singular purpose of living" Todoshi said to the Monkagero. Is this the right way or does your path of Whatever wrongly ends your way?

In 1733, at the age of fourteen times seven years old Todoshi walked out of the foothills of Shark Teeth Mountains.

He walked out of the forest in a light shower and encountered the rice farmer who forty two years ago met a girl with the perfect oval face, almond eyes, a long neck framed by dark falling hair upon straight shoulders. A very old Todoshi knelt in front of a small foot high praying stone at the edge of the farmer's rice field. The moss and lichen covered stone once had a prayer etched onto its surface but rain had worn down the prayer so it lost its words.

"Sir, how are you this morning? The sun is hiding behind the gray clouds and I can smell a heavier pour today." asked the rice farmer.

His reply was "I am glad to be. I have no luxurious desires or wants in the world except to find meaning to my existence."

After days of similar conversations, Todoshi was invited to live in farmer's spare room. And there he stayed until his last words were spoken. Todoshi had finished his journal with the battle of the Never Ending Snake Pit. Seven days before he died at the age of ninety eight Todoshi reached into the farmer's clay jar, my prison, and placed his journal into the jar. A better place than any on the path of Whatever.

You could smell the rain coming that dusk. That farmer and Todoshi had both met Princess Yūki years earlier was never brought up in the short time they shared meals together. For no reason, but each would never forget the girl with the perfect oval face, almond eyes, a long neck framed by dark falling hair upon straight shoulders.



Before a memorial supper to celebrate Todoshi's life Grandmother (Obasan) set four items on a symbolic table

Go Yen, A Story Beginning

setting for Todoshi and asked Harue what does she see? Harue answered "Well I see an old beat up tea pot, a green tea cup, a brown rice bowl, and a small decorated serving dish." Grandmother said "Long ago before we lived here the farmer who owned this house and tended to the surrounding rice fields received these utensils from a travelling monk who he took in during the monk's final days. In the old beatup tea kettle he found three notes: the first described the tea kettle that was made at the Shark Teeth Mountain Monastery and carried on his journey; the second note said the the green tea cup and rice bowl were gifts from a well known gambler, The Fist, who once owned The Red Water Inn long ago; and the third note said the side dish plate was a gift from the Lord of Thousand Sleeping Shipwrecks Golden Castle for beating the Lord at the game of Go. Once receiving these gifts, the farmer knew that the monk who lay before him was the well-known and honored monk, Todoshi, who left the Shark Teeth Mountain Monastery at the age of forty nine and travelled throughout Japan becoming a legendary figure. The farmer bowed not once, not twice, but three times when the weakened monk drew his last breath. From the nearby forested Shark Teeth Mountains came the shrilling mournful whistling and deep growling of whistling bears who stood on their rear legs watching the farmer's house.

Though barely knowing the passed monk, the farmer understood what his duty was. The farmer wrapped the lifeless body in the finest white cloth he could afford and accompanied the hired wagon carrying Todoshi back to the

Go Yen, A Story Beginning

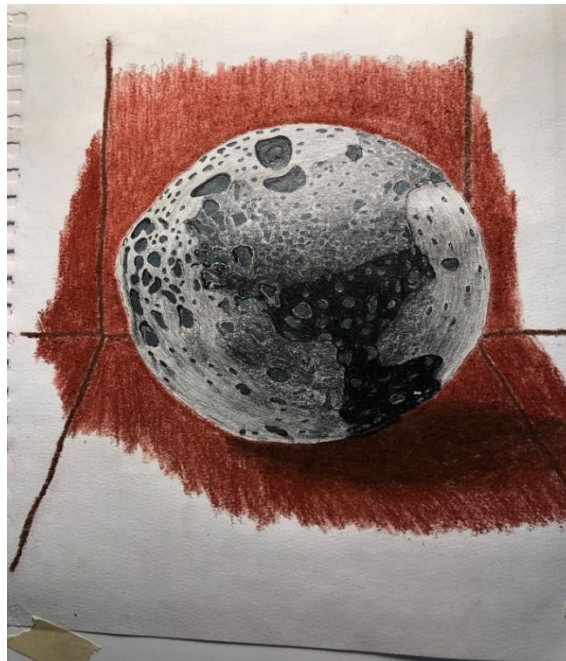
monastery. He stayed at the monastery for a day and night and sat in a well attended funeral service. Among those who spoke in reverence of the monk were former officials from the Shark Clan Thousand Sleeping Shipwrecks Golden Castle and the Bear Clan Castle of the Lake of Love Blood, and the head of the Yamasto Village, an old tailor and his wife, a hunter, and finally the new Master Monk spoke of Todoshi's attempt to save the Clan of Whistling Bears, and the Battle at the Never Ending Snake Pit. Todoshi's ashes were placed in a black lacquered urn having seven rice birds in flight upon its sides and placed on a shelf within the monastery usually reserved for only Master Monks. Beyond the monastery's bamboo fence appeared a marten, a raccoon dog, and butterfly and a fully grown bear Kuma. "So Harue each utensil carries a different memory of Todoshi's life and that is what we honor at this supper." said Grandma. What follows is an untold tale Todoshi was sworn never ever to repeat.

Before passing into Nirvana on a quiet night, Todoshi laid under the red, pink, green, and purple patch work cover of a futon (Japanese bedding). In a serene and soft light of a slow sunset the story of the Moon Egg played out in Todoshi's mind.

Go Yen, A Story Beginning

THE MOON EGG

The Master Monk tells his trusted audience of one
“Before I begin the story, what I am telling is true, for your
knowledge only because your heart will beat far longer than
mine. The story cannot be repeated to anyone under any
circumstances, for the revelation may be the destruction of
the world as we
know it. This is the
reason why the
most peaceful
meditating monks
were trained to be
the most fearless
fighters in Japan to
protect the Moon
Egg from ever
hatching.”



THE MOON EGG

{Dark Side of The Moon}

Todoshi said “I share the most secret of secrets of the
Shark Teeth monastery because you gave me a home in the
last days of this life. So I begin the story of the Moon Egg. At
the young age of seventeen I left the Shark Teeth Mountain
monastery on a pilgrimage to the Never Ending Snake Pit

Go Yen, A Story Beginning

seeking a cleansing of my troublesome and youthful soul. It was a long tiring trek and upon my arrival I entered the sacred circle of scented sandalwood trees surrounding that magnificent round smooth rock structure. Since I was given no instructions on the procedure of soul cleansing, I removed my sandals and sank my swollen and aching feet into the free flowing pure rivulet running through the waving blades of dark green grass, When my toes felt invigorated I leaned back with my arms stretched backward and looked up into the wind shaking the treetops. It was then I heard a sound similar to a slowly rolling bowling ball escaping from the birth crevasse of the Never Ending Snake Pit. The longer I sat there the louder it got. Finally a spherical shaped stone about the size of a shotput rolled out and laid there in the cold water caught between my right and left toes. The stone was so heavy I could not lift it using only one hand and even with two the lifting was difficult. Naturally I carried my discovery back to the Shark Teeth Mountain monastery. I hurried back as fast like I had to go. You know what I mean? Like I did not want to make a mess in my pants.”

“Master, see what I have found” said Todoshi as he unloaded his shoulder bag and unwrapped the yellow fabric. Todoshi continued “See this ball shaped rock. Pick it up but I warn you to use both arms because it weighs much more than you would think it weighs. When I held the stone in my hands it felt cold to the touch but I also felt some kind of energy surging through my arms warming my soul. And that is why I had to bring it back for your inspection.”

Go Yen, A Story Beginning

The Master picked up the solid spherical-shaped stone and silently gazed as he continuously repositioned the spherical-shaped stone. It was not a fearful facial expression as creased lines appeared above his eyebrows when he widen his good eye, Both eyes seemed to float around it and through it for what seemed like days as I sat on the hard wood floor. The shadows casted upon the floor lengthen and swerved as the sun moved from east to west.

Finally, I stood up and lit seven candles to cast away the dark in the inner sanctum of the monastery. The light revealed the quietness of the enclosed space, except for, the murmur of evening chanting of my brother monks in the praying temple. The twirling white wisps from burning incense floated above the praying bowl. The stone must have surprised the Master who whispered of its wonder.

Master Monk revealed “A long time ago when I was seven years old I was told an ancient tale of how a Master, centuries before I was born, came upon what he named the Moon Egg. The tale attached to this Moon Egg generated great concern because if it was true and there was no way of proving the tale was true without destroying the world as we know it. How the Moon Egg could hatch no one knew. Some say its origin began as a small piece of earth’s inner core of the densest iron broke off the core and for millions and perhaps billions of years even before any life as a single cell of bacteria appeared in the world. It gradually swirled through the outer core and mantle and finally nested in a large magma chamber many miles below the crust underneath the Shark Teeth Mountains until the earth crust

Go Yen, A Story Beginning

was cracked and another fissure eruption spitted out the Moon Egg and covered the egg beneath the ground where the foundation of our monastery stands. The Master in ancient times was said to lift up the spherical stone high in the white winter night staring high above the horizon into the clear sky with a full moon. He moved this stone to partially superimpose the white and gray circle of the full moon. The Master deduced in a moment of excitement his fingers held an egg that if hatched another moon would break free from the force of gravity launching and orbit into the sky. The birth would break the ying yang relationships amongst the sun, stars, moon, and our earth. He had premonitions of huge shifts of the ground beneath his feet shaking the whole island and terrible tsunamis destroying Thousand Sleeping Shipwrecks Golden Castle and overflowing the lake below the monastery.

Todoshi asked "Okay Master, how does one hatch a Moon Egg? Would you have to capture a large bird with a big nest and place the Moon Egg under the bird? I have yet to see such a bird of a size large enough flying in the forest of the Shark Teeth Mountains". The frowning Master looked down at the bare wooden floor in front of him for a long time contemplating his response. Master Monk answered "No, I suspect it is not a living being so one cannot assume it follows the natural birthing process of any bird, reptile, or any other species that laid eggs. Since its heaviness suggests the origin from the earth inner organs, it may require a heat source of the Mother Earth. Perhaps, instead of cracking of an egg with an eggshell, the hatching of the Moon Egg

Go Yen, A Story Beginning

demands the melting of the shell, in order to, release the baby Moon amongst the stars. If you were ever enveloped as you stood on the rim of an erupting volcanic crater or stood at the very edge of an advancing lava flow then you must conclude only such dangerous places and flesh melting heat could melt the Moon Egg. I am only speculating but only these places maybe able to generate the heat far greater than the furnace of a blacksmith forging weapons of war. But I would be a fool to test my assumptions.”

Master Monk said “One moonless dark night the ancient Master bundled the Moon Egg, left by the back gate of the monastery without anyone’s knowledge, and began to wander into the Shark Teeth Mountains seeking a safe and secret place where no one would be tempted to hatch the Moon Egg, He was gone for months on end until he settled on walking into the birth crevasse of the Never Ending Snake Pit. He bravely sucked in his big belly and squeezed through the opening. He was surprised that he was able to walk fully erect once within what seemed an endless lava tube. The ancient Master Monk whispered “this thing I do risking my life for humanity and no one will know how I saved the world.” He slowly went further in chanted away evil spirits dwelling in the cold abandoned vein of the Earth Fire God. He found a small ledge and placed the Moon Egg the ancient Master then sat and meditated in the cold silence. There it nestled until centuries of earth tremors eventually moved the Moon Egg off the ledge fell into the small underground rivulet then as more centuries flew by the Moon Egg was gradually swept into the sandalwood scented

GO YEN

Go Yen, A Story Beginning

open air and grass surrounding the Never Ending Snake Pit while you, Todoshi, washed his tired feet.

My Master decided he would not repeat the decision of the ancient Master and built then forever sealed the vault beneath the monastery under the huge meditating Buddha statue and there the Moon Egg nest. After Master told me this tale in my mind I, Todoshi, secretly renamed the Shark Teeth monastery to the Moon Egg Nest monastery in my mind only. To you I swear my words are true upon my dying breath.” With a last breath he warned “The world is full of good and evil.” And then he was gone to be reincarnated.

BOOK ONE THE END



BOOK TWO

JOURNEYS



Go Yen, Journeys

Chapter 1 AN END AND BEGINNING

Ninety years earlier, in 1692, Yūki returned to the Castle of the Lake and for seven months. The Princess and the Lady in Waiting hid Yūki's increased size and weight, because both knew the stuck up old farts of the Government Councils disfavor. A baby from commoner stock would bring shame upon the Lord's family. During the months of pregnancy the Lady in Waiting would wear white silk padding under her kimono and increase the padding size as necessary. She even added more small weighted beads each month to produce a realistic struggle to walk properly, while Yūki tightly wrapped her breast and abdomen with strips of smooth as silk undergarments.

"I am so sorry little one for confining your room inside me because I need to hide you little one" apologized Yūki.

Go Yen, Journeys

The parenthood plan was that both would secretly travel back to the homeland of the Lady in Waiting, the fishing village named “Six on ice One on my hook” and the Lady in Waiting would retire and raise Yūki’s baby as her own. Yūki would arrange visits every autumn, spring and mid-summer.

It was a moon lit morning during spring in a small sheltered cove. A shower splash of wild flowers of every color surrounded the sanctuary like a silk futon. The open pavilion was built for meditation and shelter for pilgrims. Seven white pine columns supported a golden yellow thatch roof and the scented air from the warm blue green ocean enveloped the pavilion, Lady in Waiting, Yūki, and a new born baby girl.

{Somewhere}

The only sounds heard were the gentle lapping of the blue green sea upon the white sand beach, the soft crying of a baby, and whispering. The scene was a moment of joy followed by sudden sadness and then a promise that would be kept through generations. The worried Lady in Waiting was a fine mid-wife but Yūki had a difficult delivery and the bleeding was slow but did not stop.

“I feel like the yellow moon waning into the Shark Teeth Mountains.” whispered Yūki as she struggled to lift her pale white left arm trembling as she pointed toward the West horizon.

“Please forgive me for the burden I have brought in your caring hands. I would like my daughter to be named Yu’ uga na. She will grow up not in a high castle but she will become a graceful woman.” foretold Yūki.

Go Yen, Journeys

Lying on Yūki's chest Yu' uga na listened to Yūki's fading heartbeats as the Lady in Waiting promised to both "No harm will be done against the women in your family line even beyond my mere mortal life." And a promise is a promise to be kept. The princess said "When I pass from this reality take my favorite sleepwear of pink and green for your own and hide my lifeless human form in the lake so I can turn toward my dear, my love, my farmer and see the rice farms during the annual flooding of the rice fields."

Yūki left this world recalling her romance with the rice farmer and their baby girl, Yu' uga na. Upon the Lady in Waiting fulfilling Yūki's request the color of the lake turned red and hence forever became known as The Lake of Love Blood.



Princess Yūki

Go Yen, Journeys

So one morning the residents of Haunted Blood Town woke up to see a red lake, instead of, the blue water surface of yesterday. They blamed the fishermen who took too much fish and gutted their catch using the lake water. Their reply was “You so stupid. Wasn’t us the fishing industry. Must be the town inhabitants polluting the lake with all the damn shit you guys flush in the lake” The inhabitants of the castle of the lake saw the red color as a premonition of war and plague. The castle Lord did not look out the window or stand on the castle wall to view the red color because he was overwhelmed with the question of what happened to his baby, the princess.

Yūki’s disappearance caused evil, dark shadows to fall upon the castle overlooking Haunted Blood Town and the Lake of Love Blood. Forever after, the Castle would be known as the Castle of Lake of Love Blood. The blood red and sun yellow leaves fell in autumn and a harsh black winter commenced. Spring did not bring new leaves or flowers. The land became bare and without life, except for the rice fields. The landscape was colorless only the Lake of Love Blood retained its new color of blood red.

After the Bear and Shark ate the fox war, the disfigured Lord of Lake of Love Blood Castle hardly ever was in the view of anyone. He preferred not being seen and having to deal with comments like “You don’t look different”. His presence in the castle was limited to the recognition of his voice behind closed shoji doors that separated him from the audience eyes. If no answer was received they understood he just did not want to be bothered. And yet he fairly

Go Yen, Journeys

adjudicated injustice placed upon the people behind these blank screen doors. He often doled out compensation where farmers were subjected to burdening tax on their rice harvest. When simple town's people were paying abhorrent prices for food he would intervene by scolding greedy merchants. But this was not a one way-street because often lower castle officials would return to the castle with notes of prayer for Princess Yūki, Then he would get on his knees and bow facing the direction of Haunted Blood Town and always shed a tear or two.

Yūki's father the Great Lord performed his duties in war and peace with humility and fairness but with an enormous emptiness in his heart until he died with a Ninja arrow in his heart. He had lost the Red Ruby one year after Yūki's birth in the "Bear and Shark ate the Fox" War.



Go Yen, Journeys

Chapter 2 AN ENCOUNTER AND THEN SOME

A Yakuza Boss named Yobushi or Fist frequented the fishing village named “Six on ice One on my hook “and spent fun times on an elderly couple’s boat. These times reminded Yobushi of his innocent youth seeking out fun and family times. Yobushi and the elderly couple who looked after Yu’ uga na became close friends. To him Yu’ga na was the granddaughter from his daughter lost on a fishing boat during a surprise typhoon storm.

Yobushi invites “Please accept my invitation for an all-expenses paid vacation at my humble inn at Haunted Blood Town”

The surprised elderly couple accepted and so Yobushi and his entourage traveled westward along the South Highway around the southern tip of the island. Through the route to their right was always mountain slopes covered with a dark green forest swaying in the strong southern winds and to their left was a choppy sea of white caps and waves crashing into the rocky shoreline. Occasionally they would

Go Yen, Journeys

see brave fishermen climbing down the sea cliffs to get to a ledge where they throw out their lines with baited hooks. The excited group gladly arrives at the Seventh Bridge, the Red Bridge, from Haunted Blood Town.

Yu' uga na sighs and tells Yobushi "I have heard of the red waters and the Princess' everlasting love of a rice farmer.

Yobushi nods and sighs "My humble inn serves the reddish tinted rice grown from such water and our journey end is just six more foot bridges farther".

Upon reaching the Red Water Inn, Yobushi bows deep to the elderly couple and even to Yu' uga na allowing them to walk through the main entrance and then he instructs the inn staff to take excellent care of his three guests, as though they are his own family. Hot bathing water is drawn and members of the staff scrub the backs of the guests with soft soapy towels, massage their weary shoulders, legs, sole of feet and after rinsing off all three sink into a wooden tub of steaming hot water, a wooden furo.

After they are given soft blue and white night robes, purple and green house straw slippers to wear. Yobushi and all have an entertaining dinner while ladies dance and sing old folk songs which originated from "Six on ice One on my hook". Smiles were worn on everyone's faces and bodies swaying to and fro.

Slightly after they heard a walking watchman outside yell out "The hour is 8 o' clock and make sure all candles and cooking fires are extinguished." all went to their sleeping rooms.

Go Yen, Journeys

*“Goodnight Yobushi. Goodnight Grandma and Grandpa”
Yu’ uga na said as she bent over and bowed with respect.*

*“What is scratching the shoji door this late at night?”
whispers to herself as Yu’ uga na pushes aside her futon
bedding.*

*With a house slipper in her right hand she slides the
paper screen door open. Sitting and licking a front paw was
a kawaii (cute) black cat. It was an instant bonding.*

“You are a cutie!” Yu’ uga na exclaimed!

*The black cat bowed with a cultured movement until the
cat’s chin touch the tatami floor at Yu’ uga na’s feet. From
that first night Yu’ uga na had a sleeping partner who kept
warmly snuggled against her feet and a playful prancing
companion during the day. First, the Yakuza Boss, and owner
of the Red Water Inn approved of this union for Yu’ uga na
was the granddaughter he never had. In the afternoon
Yobushi, the elderly couple, and Yu’ uga na sat around a low
square table and played a Japanese card game Hanafuda
each had a heated blanket warming their legs under the
table.*

*The summer of 1709 in Haunted Blood Town was cooler
than usual. The Circus came to town with side shows of
strange creatures and human oddities like a stretching man
twisted into a pretzel. The Circus owner’s family, a young
wife, two boys, and a young girl stayed at the Red Water Inn.
The girl was around Yu’ uga na’s age and both enjoyed
going shopping or just hanging out and being silly.*

Go Yen, Journeys

“Ah! Today the cards are terrible for me no Tsuki (moon) or Tsuru (crane) card. These two cards were worth twenty points each. But the luck is with you Yu uga na. I am fortunate we are playing free for fun and not for money.” said Yobushi.

The elderly couple smiled as Yu” uga na giggled playfully with a hand hiding her mouth. Such happy times are fleeting. As easy come easy go!

The Circus owner had hired the Ninja who crafted the bird sounding arrow killing Yu’ uga na’s great grandfather near the Never Ending Cave. Unlike the individual characteristics, such as, the shape of a nose, curvature of eyebrows, and hair color the Circus owner’s breeding ground of evilness and greed did not pass on to his daughter.

On this night there wasn’t one ripple on the still surface of Lake of Love Blood. The silver moon’s reflection became a perfect blood red oval shape floating on darker shade reddish surface. A bad moon rising! In the back of the Red Water Inn stood a wooden gambling house large enough to accommodate twenty gamblers sitting on a sweat stained tatami floor in two rows and facing each other.

The dice game called Cho-Han was played with two dice placed in a small bamboo cup and tossed every which way produced a sound much like a busy woodpecker pecking away. The gamblers placed bets on the floor on whether the number of dots facing heaven was even (Cho) or odd (Han) hidden under the upside down cup.

Go Yen, Journeys

Sixteen years after torturing and killing the Lady in Waiting to find out the whereabouts of Princess Yūki and her baby the Evil Chamberlain returned to Red Water Inn and his life and the baby would nearly cross paths but not. It is a good thing too because Yu ' uga na carried her mother's good looks to the max.

It was very evident having an oval face with almond eyes a long neck framed by falling dark hair upon straight shoulders.

{House of The Rising Sun}

The Evil Chamberlain came to gamble at the Red Water Inn very late at night way after children like Yu' uga na and the Circus owner's daughter went to bed. And Yobushi would never allow their paths to cross for evil and good were best kept separated like water and oil. The Lady in Waiting in the form of a black cat lay at Yu' uga na's feet, cat eyes wide open with head resting on the front paws. Ears pointed high intent on any strange soft sounds outside in the garden and hallway like the creak of the wooden floor and a foot step upon a blade of grass.

The night was young by gambling standards, the moon was honey yellow, and the heavy lifeless leaves were tumbling down. The Evil Chamberlain and Circus owner sat opposite Yobushi who held the worn brown bamboo cup and the pair of dice. The Evil Chamberlain was losing big money more than his monthly stipend and getting irritable with each loss of more money.

Go Yen, Journeys

The Circus owner was winning but not by much and still he had the nerve to edge on the Evil Chamberlain by saying "Don't bet stupid! Why not follow my betting and make some money back?".

Yobushi's men stood at each corner of the room and two sat quietly behind Yobushi. The Evil Chamberlain had brought a group of seven low status Samurai who waited outside the Red Water Inn while another two sat just outside the gambling house. Only the Circus owner appeared to be defenseless for he did not have any visible protection. Hidden in the dark shadows of the side alleys along both sides of the Red Water Inn, bonsai garden, and attic of the gambling house were seven Ninja. Some say be stupid lose money. Be a dumb shit lose your life. What happens next is a good example of the later.

Yobushi sat dressed only with a loin cloth and felt a drop of slippery sweat sliding down his neck. Yobushi raised the empty cup in his left and showed the gamblers it was empty. At the same time Yobushi raised his right hand holding the dice between his three fingers and dropped the dice into the cup. At this second in time, the Evil Chamberlain confronts the Circus Owner.

"You are only an untouchable who picks up monkey crap! I am surprised you can afford to stay at the Red Water Inn." shouts the Evil Chamberlain.

The two men outside heard the commotion and one went to inform the outside samurai of the potential trouble. The

Go Yen, Journeys

Ninja in the attic silently lifted a ceiling panel and peered down to assess the danger faced by the Circus owner. While the number one rule was "No weapons allowed in the gambling house". The Evil Chamberlain hid a short sword under his kimono.

Yobushi never carried a concealed weapon for his reputation was built by the two heavy boulders at the end of each arm. Good reason to be named Fist or Yobushi.

The Evil Chamberlain sipped some sake and then bending at the waist, faked a loud cough and reached inside his black silk kimono. Yobushi sat still and felt the drop of slippery sweat sliding down his chest. Only seven inches of the Red Eye Dagger silver blade was drawn before a thin tiny splinter of poisoned bamboo pierced the evil Chamberlain's jugular vein below his left ear. The poison would swiftly stop the brain and heart in seven tenths of a nanosecond.

The lone samurai opened the sliding door only to have a bamboo splinter puncture his right eye; the sharp tip reaching the brain and causing instant death. As the group of samurai ran through the Red Water Inn and bonsai garden some were greeted by a star shaped throwing knife or strangled by a garrote. Two who ran through the main corridor of the Red Water Inn were spooked by the Lady in Waiting's sword slicing off a head of the first and the second after a sudden stop found his head split into two hemispheres. All the while Yu'ga na slept. Yobushi's men surrounded their boss in order to block any harm headed his way as he sat opposite the motionless Circus owner.

Go Yen, Journeys

As Yobushi's drop of sliding, salty sweat reached his belly button the Evil Chamberlain's dead head finally hit the sweaty floor now stained with blood, sweat, and tears. Who is kidding who? No one cried for the evil person's motionless body. To evade the army of police, the bodies were hidden on hooded boats that gilded into the Lake of Love Blood and the weighted bodies were tossed into blood red water, making the lake a blood bath. Yikes! Now the Evil Chamberlain would share the same grave with Princess Yūki and I cannot fathom their reaction if they met. Yobushi stood up as the drop of sweat splashed and seeped into the tatami floor.

The Circus owner placed his small winning and the Red Eye Dagger into his kimono pocket and went to his room as all the Ninja disappeared into the darkness. Throughout all this the elderly couple, Yu' uga na, and the Circus owner's daughter did not wake up from their sleep. The next morning Yobushi convinced the Circus owner he would forget the previous night for the Red Eye Dagger.

"The police started asking questions after you and your ninjas left the gambling house. The Red Water Inn has a five star rating and a very respectable reputation with the Castle of the Lake's authorities and bureaucrats. I can see where your last night actions will place my inn under the magistrate's magnifying glass especially since my men disposed of the bloody bodies into the Lake. I don't imagine any of the Castle inner council and bureaucrats will miss the

Chamberlain for more than seven seconds.” Yobushi spitted out in guttural tone and then added “Don’t expect to bring your circus back to Haunted Blood Town for another five years and don’t expect to have any room reservations being confirmed for your convenience at the Red Water Inn for another ten years.”

Before they left for the fishing village the Fist gave the Red Eye Dagger to Yu’ uga na and showed her all the defensive motions and offensive moves, seven in all, that will kill any attacking enemy large or small, four legged or two legged.

“You must never use the dagger in anger. I can tell this is an ancient dagger and by the shape of the blade it is not of Japanese nor Korean or Chinese sword makers. I can only guess it was forged in the strange lands beyond the lands of tigers and elephants because I have seen the foreigners with red hair and beards carrying similar daggers.” informed The Fist.

Yu’ uga na replied “Not to pay you any disrespect but may I refuse to accept your gift? Though it is a beautiful weapon, it is a weapon and I would not be worthy of its value.”

“Nonsense child as you grow older I fear you will have many adversaries who will try to hurt you and steal what secrets you will eventually acquire. I have no doubts for one who has a perfect oval face with almond eyes, and dark falling hair upon straight shoulders. You and your companions have great number of such moments ahead.”

Go Yen, Journeys

said Yobushi as he knelt forward to light a slender cigarette at the end of a long black bamboo cigarette holder.

He stood up and inserted the dagger into his sleeve until the handle was completely hidden from sight. He made a distracting movement with his neck and with a slight of hand motion the Red Eye Dagger was flung into a wooden post no more than seven feet away. Straight and true the dagger stood, no less than a split second had passed.

"Holy cow! Yobushi that was amazing." shouted Yu' uga na

"It is not only a speedy blade that can defeat an adversary but also a slow fluid motion. I will teach you seven ways which you can apply either a speedy or slow way of the dagger." replied Yobushi.

This is how the Red Eye dagger becomes a constant companion of the women of Princess Yūki. And even Yobushi does not know the secret powers and history of the blade.

Between the ages of seven and seventeen our heroine Harue had gradually added to her secret bundle. Items were added and some were taken out. The only constant companions were the bronze coin and the monk's journal.

"I hope I don't collect too many treasures before my journey; otherwise I will need to rent a storage compartment at the neighborhood rental storage place." Harue whispers to Lucky in jest.

The Autumn of 1862 Grandmother became ill. Grandmother laid on her deathbed and asked "Harue please cool my forehead with a cool wet towel. We are all white

Go Yen, Journeys

cherry blossoms withering in the cold and cruel wind of aging. Take my ashes to a small fishing village called, Six on ice One on my hook, near the Hebi River then proceed North to a small sheltered cove with a white beach. There you will find a pavilion surrounded by a flower bed. It is my wish you scatter my ashes into the lapping waves washing onto the white sand beach.” Grandmother instructed in a weakening voice. Grandmother passed on within seven minutes with Lucky paws upon her chest and Harue held tightly Grandmother’s hands.

Harue whispered “Obasan, Grandmother, thank you for all your love and care”.

After the proper ceremony and cremation, Harue and Lucky, her black cat, left Grandmother’s house carrying Grandmother ash remains in her backpack and walked through Haunted Blood Town on Obake Neko Street past the Red Water Inn. Standing on the Red Bridge, last of seven foot bridges, Harue took in the expansive reddish surface of Lake of Love Blood. She turned to her left and wondered about the lives of those who had lived in the Castle of Lake of Love Blood which was now a tourist site. Turning again she saw the Buddhist monastery still cradled amongst the dark green branches of tall pine trees and bamboo forest of Shark Teeth Mountains. She watched as gentle white mists floated and evaporated in the green valley below the monastery warmed by the rising sun.

“I wonder how long I will be away.” Harue whispered to Lucky who purred and peeked out of Harue’s backpack

Go Yen, Journeys

made with a bamboo frame and waterproof tan animal hide, definitely not bearskin.

"Well, Lucky are you ready for an adventure? I am! Though we are going to scatter Grandmother's ashes, I am looking forward to see different and strange places and hopefully meet good people along the way"

From Haunted Blood Town Harue walked the southern coastline highway and reached the small fishing village, Six on ice One on my hook, in seven days. While staying at an inexpensive inn and walking along the small boat harbor village inhabitants especially, those older than eighty would come up to Harue.

"Do I know you? Your face reminds me of a boy and girl I knew when I was a child in this village.

Harue replied "I don't believe so and as far as I know I have no siblings or cousins. I was raised by my grandmother in a house near Lake of Love Blood but I do feel so very much at home here and I don't know why. To those her age or younger they would just pass her by as strangers, maybe with a polite nod". Harue followed Grandmother's instructions to the tee so she stood at the edge of a deep gulch and allowed Lucky to scamper down the slightly steep overgrown grass trail before her. Thus under a yellow wheat full moon and the first evening star, Harue walked pass the remnants of seven white pine columns, through a bed of wildflowers to the white fine sand beach and scattered Grandmother's

Go Yen, Journeys



ashes along the edge of the lapping sea. No sooner than your next breathe a white seal emerged. The

white seal used its flaps to raise its head and turned to inspect Harue just like Grandmother would do whenever Harue would return from Haunted Blood Town.

Lucky had jumped onto the elevated remnants of the pavilion and the Lady in Waiting landed on hands and feet and stood quietly and watched Harue scattering Grandmother's ashes. By this time the white seal had reached the northern most white column where Yu uga' na had hid the Red Eye Dagger, flapped its front fins and then the white seal exposed the Red Eye Dagger.

Harue walked over to the commotion of sand flying all over the place and picked up the Red Eye Dagger and said to Lucky

"Finders keepers, losers, weepers!" It felt at home in Harue's hand as she explored the balance of the blade and handle. Grandmother had described the small sheltered cove as the ending and the beginning of their lineage with no mention of royal red blood flowing within Harue. Also, Harue

Go Yen, Journeys

had no clue that the Red Eye dagger was once the possession of her great, great, great grandmother.

Harue left the small sheltered cove. While climbing a zig zag trail up the ravine slope, Harue turned toward the sea and bowed not once, not twice, but three times at which time Grandmother appeared floating above the sea to say one last farewell.

“Harue we are all more than we appear to be and never lose nor spend Go Yen.”

“Oh! Wow! She knew! Grandmother knew! Oh my and she never asked if she could use it in tough and tight times” Harue gasped as tears fell from her almond eyes.

Harue chanted “All in life is temporary, fleeting and fragile” three times.

{Sukiyaki}

Harue sat on the black sand beach at the mouth of the Hebi River. She had sunk her hands deep into the cool black sand as she leaned back. She stood up and unconsciously bushed her hands against the front of her pants. Low and behold hers pants were covered with old charcoal.

Apparently campers had previously built a fire and covered the ashes with sand. “Look Lucky, now I am as black as you are” said Harue, while Lucky the black cat chased yellow and blue butterflies. Harue held Todoshi’s journal and decided to, also, take the path of “Whatever” instead of returning to grandmother’s house. :Lucky we are going to experience an adventure” She hiked along the south bank of Hebi River frequently greeting younger children with fishing poles and isolated rice farmers in the rice paddies. Gradually the

Go Yen, Journeys

number of such occurrences became less until none. Her perfect oval face almond eyes a long neck framed by dark falling hair upon straight shoulders would be mirrored in each of the seven sacred pools.

Between the fifth and sixth waterfall, while Harue was picking wild berries and digging up brown edible roots, a playful bear cub had an encounter with Lucky. When Harue rescued Lucky the bear cub sniffed around the pouch carrying Todoshi's journal. The bear cub went down on his fore legs and paid his respect to Harue. Harue had found a friend or more likely a young ambassador from the Whistling Bear Clan once saved by Teru and Todoshi. By this time Lucky was not as freaked out with bear cub chasing her. Lucky and bear cub became great allies because bear cub would catch carp and share the raw fish feast with Lucky and Harue. Another generation of bigger bears stood as sentinels along the ridges overlooking the Hebi River.



Go Yen, Journeys

CHAPTER 3 HARUE BEGINS

So in the winter of 1862 Harue hiked along the same trail as Todoshi did. It was not the best time of the year to go outdoors because the northeast winds blew cold over the Pacific Ocean bringing hard rain over Japan and the typhoon season was still on. Typhoons from the southern direction frequently caused havoc along the east coastline villages. When she reached the bottom of the vertical face of layered lava rock cliff Harue found a ninja star shaped throwing knife which Todoshi successfully deflected as she had read in his journal. As Harue climbed upward pressing against the cold layered lava rock face. Harue recalls the ninja attack and the strange puncture within Todoshi's journal she carried. After reaching the cliff top, as a matter of curiosity, Harue inserted the star shaped throwing knife into the puncture of Todoshi's journal. "A perfect fit like the best shoes ever" she nodded and whispered into the wind.

Go Yen, Journeys

Later on Harue nodded her head acknowledging where Todoshi avoided the seven poisonous red gas pellets. A giant ancient pine tree had fallen and created a dark brown trunk bridge across the seventy feet deep gorge of the angry and roaring Hebi River white water. bear cub bravely took the lead upon the dark green moss covered tree brown trunk bridge disappearing into the white mist veil rising from the angry white waters below. "Please Lucky don't be afraid because it's strong enough. If it can hold up for bear cub you need not worry. And if you don't know cats are supposed to have nine lives" said Harue as she touched Lucky shiny wet black nose and stroked Lucky's back to her upright tail. Lucky thought "Boy if she only knew how many lives I've already have and the many more to come as long as the women lineage of Princess Yūki exist".

Harue eventually reached the forest clearing at Never Ending Snake Pit and touched the punctured bark of wide Sandal wood tree trunk that protected Todoshi from ninja arrows. She felt the rusty remains of the ninja's arrowheads in the trunk and felt a slight shiver and cold sweat on her bare skin. She said to Lucky "I hope the rain has washed off the ninja's arrowheads that my finger felt. If not that was a big bad mistake on my part". Harue thoroughly washed her hands in the rivulet. Here the Hebi River flowed as a shallow clear and cold rivulet. The tall circular stone structure called the Never Ending Snake Pit was a perfect place, a birthing place, a sacred place.

Go Yen, Journeys

When Harue walked through the ankle high dark green turf the divine wind blew across the clearing causing the swaying dance back and forth, back and forth, to and fro, to and fro of the blades of grass like the arms of dancers circling during an Obon festival or the audience at a rock concert keeping tempo with a song. Harue sat down cross legged with bear cub and Lucky declaring

“Do you know what! Do you know what I have accomplished? I have finally reached the end of Todoshi’s journal and from this day forward the journey is mine alone, mine alone! Can you imagine?” Lucky climbed upon her lap while bear cub sniffed around the circular stone structure.

Our heroine Harue took a northerly path through the Shark Teeth Mountains. She hiked up and down, down and up, and up and down with bear cub and Lucky. When Harue saw evidence of others close by, like smoke in daylight or camp fires at night Harue wisely stayed away. She would whisper to bear cub and Lucky

“Please be very quiet during day and especially at night when just a whimper will carry for many miles. We cannot defend ourselves against bear trappers, robbers and murders of the Shark Teeth Mountains. I know you can fight but cat and bear cub claws are not enough, these evil men carry stolen sharp knives and dead samurai swords and spears, and ninja garrotes and throwing knives and they use baits that will put you to sleep so they can gut you and skin you.”

Go Yen, Journeys

Harue's description scared both bear cub and the black cat who hugged their heads with their front paws.

The urban legends told by children in Haunted Blood Town included wild boars having seven inch long curved tusks, tribes of snow monkeys, wild dogs, bears, evil ghosts and gods.

Two things Harue did not know, No! Three things were Go Yen was a magic coin, the Lady in Waiting whose sword had tasted evil blood was within Lucky, and she, Harue, carried the royal blood of those who long ago had lived in the Castle overlooking the Lake of Love Blood overseeing Haunted Blood Town and the Castle above Thousand Sleeping Shipwrecks Golden Town. And there is one thing you don't know and that is what happened to the Lady in Waiting.

After Yūki and the Lady in Waiting disappeared from the castle not only did darkness fall, blackish clouds blocked the sunlight during the day and whatever phase of moon during the night, and a damp heavy thick humid air was breathed in throughout the land. The darkness attracted Evil in the form of greedy and ambitious men. Like maggots to a rotting, corpse one such person was the Chamberlain to the Castle of Lake of Love Blood.

He was one bad dude who tried to improve his position in the Castle of the Lake of Love Blood by declaring unfavorable descriptions of his action as fake news. They, who posted such unfavorable news, were the enemy of the Lord's government. He was known to never apologizing after

Go Yen, Journeys

committing a mistake and always laid the blame on employees in the Lord's administration and even those who supported him in the past. The Chamberlain bragged that he could draw his sword in broad daylight on the busy main street and cut someone and no one would accuse him of the crime. He would always falsely exaggerate the smallest of his own deeds into exaggerated falsehoods like. "Today I did some really big, really, really beautiful things for the fiefdom." he would often declare.

Small stuff became very big accomplishments to gain the council and Lord's favor. In private conversations with his supporters he would brag about lying to the council and Lord creating the illusion that they were weak minded. Wrong actions always were the fault of others on the council. When others were challenging the facts behind his accusations the Evil Chamberlain would have his stooges do a walk back statement by saying the Chamberlain's statement was misinterpreted by others or just say others were flat out liars.

The Evil Chamberlain's spokesperson would speak words then five minutes later would become defensive and deny the conversation. The meaning of his words disintegrated with a gentle breeze of truth. His was narcissism to the max! The Evil Chamberlain's every thought was about him and for his profit margin. He was what others in the Lord's inner council would label as a one trick jackass.

His one trick was to hire subordinates, give them little rollout instructions, and later blame them for their blunders.

Go Yen, Journeys

He was a perfect Chamberlain in his own perfect world and he did no wrong! He would lie that the fiefdom administration branch was running like a fine tuned machine even though big blunders occurred as frequently as a grasshopper hops from a grass blade to another. Perfect machine is a laugh when he frequently removed subordinates from positions as they disagree with his alternative facts. More frequently those removed were found out by the council to be bribing merchants for money or using castle funds for personal expenses like family vacations at five star resorts.

During the Lord's council meeting he would exclaim "We shall make the Bear Clan great again! Very very very great! There hasn't been any greater clan in history or in the future any clan will be as great! Bear Clan First!!!"

"The Lake of Love Blood Castle, the Bear Clan, stopped winning since thirty years ago and had lost land to other fiefdoms as spies and terrorists were invading the fiefdom causing fear amongst the farmers and village people. Enemies were not afraid to poke the bear! I repeat Enemies were not afraid to poke the bear!"

"We need to build bigger better barriers, big walls, I mean the biggest walls ever seen to keep out illegal immigrants and need to build a navy of winningest warships on the lake, in addition to, increasing the samurai forces along the border. We can pay for these great things by raising the toll prices along the seven bridges to the south sea of Japan. Yes you heard me right the Bear clan won't spend a single yen because the other clans around the lake and the foreign importers will pay through higher toll fees."

Go Yen, Journeys

The Chamberlain shouted out, though he presented no evidence, to substantiate that an increase of defense spending was necessary .What he held back was he knew the commoners would have to carry a greater unfair tax burden though in public he shouted less taxes for the poor. He said “Give the rich merchants and castle owners a big tax break and their spending money would trickle down to the common people who would become rich!”

“I know it is true because I have my own intelligence sources” the Chamberlain claimed with glaring eyes and slammed the table with both fists, shaking the table and shaking the thinking of others.

The Chamberlain claimed “The built barriers and new navy of warships will be very, very beautiful and make the fiefdom very, very strong again! And save our treasury millions! No billions of yen! ”



The Chamberlain thought the women in the castle and beyond the castle walls were to serve at his pleasure and bragged about how he could take advantage of women just because he was the Chamberlain. He was the kind of man that

would constantly cheat on his wife. So why would any sane person trust the man not to cheat the Lord's government?

Go Yen, Journeys

The Chamberlain sent spies to the homeland of the Lady in Waiting. The spies brought the Lady in Waiting back to the Red Water Inn in Haunted Blood Town. The Evil Chamberlain attempted to uncover the secret of Princess Yūki's plot by torturing and interrogating the Lady in Waiting who revealed the baby was dead born and the Princess Yūki died at childbirth of bleeding and complications.

"You are lying! You know who you are lying to Bitch?" declared the Chamberlain. "I will cut out your tongue and heart. It will be really, really, really messy. So don't make me cover my royal garment with your damn dirty blood".

He used the Red Eye Dagger to end the Lady in Waiting's first life by first cutting out her tongue and then pulling out her still pulsating heart and left the inn using the back gate.

"Don't they realize I always keep my promise and it will go so well like a fine tuned machine? I am really great and beautiful."

Before the spies came in to dispose of the mutilated Lady in Waiting, a stray short haired black cat with high pointed ears silently sneaked in and drank from the pool of blood and bit into the Lady in Waiting's bright blood red heart still beating. From that moment on, the Lady in Waiting and the black cat became one.

Yes two can be one. Yes mathematically two can be equal to one as the Lady in Waiting's ghost embodies the living body of a homeless stray black cat.

Before her capture by the Evil Chamberlain's spies the Lady in Waiting had given Yu' uga na to an old couple who

Go Yen, Journeys

wisely hid the baby on a small fishing boat at sea. They knew the danger they were taking on by hiding this baby but the old couple agreed to risk their lives against all odds of succeeding. So they planned.

“Husband, do not return from sea until I light a bonfire for one night each week for a whole month. Until then you should consider the village still a danger with the Evil Chamberlain spies amongst villagers. Take two goats for baby’s milk and two month supply of drinking water and rice” the fisherman’s wife instructed.

After the spies got tired of gaining no new knowledge they departed. You would normally figure that out of seventy villagers there would be one person who would betray the old couple and Lady in Waiting for a bundle of gold but there were none. The Chamberlain accepted the Lady in Waiting’s revelations given by his spies. The old fisherman and new baby girl returned to “Six on ice One on my hook” village as planned Yu’ uga na grew up to be graceful and never knowing of the royal blood and her connection to the Castle of the Lake nor in her lifetime the castle had become to be known as Castle of Lake of Love Blood.

She never felt any want for chests filled with riches or the clutter of useless objects. As Princess Yūki had predicted Yu’uga na grew up as a graceful woman who lived in “Six on ice One on my hook” the small fishing village located south of the mouth of the Hebi River on the East coast of Japan. On a moon less night during a hard rain above the tree line of the Shark Teeth Mountains, Lucky sat on the windowsill.

Go Yen, Journeys

The black cat became, as pledged, a constant companion and protector while Yu'uga na grew into adulthood and would hiss at men who would pursue Yu'uga na. No male villager could resist her almond eyes, and long neck framed by dark falling hair upon straight shoulders.

She eventually married a local successful but humble fisherman and gave birth to a son. Late one chilling white winter as the waves froze on the sea boulders the old couple heard rumors of Chamberlain spies once again roaming the slopes and valleys of the Shark Teeth Mountains of East coast of Japan. Leaving the baby boy with the fisherman's wife the old fisherman and Yu'uga na hiked deep into the Shark Teeth Mountains and sought refuge in a tribal village where villagers secretly practiced the Ninja black magic and fighting skills. The old fisherman said to Yu'uga na

"I will say to your husband we went out on my fishing boat and you were swallowed into the dark black choppy sea. For your own safety you must live as a Ninja and never return to 'Six on ice One on my hook'. " Before leaving the old fisherman wiped one last tear because there would be no more crying for fearing the truth of Yu'uga na's existence might surface. "This morning when the other boats go out we will ,also, row out and trail the others beyond the breakers. But instead of following to the regular fishing grounds we will head north along the shoreline. Once the small cove with the pavilion is in sight you swim ashore and hide by the pavilion. I will row to the other boats and say you had gone in the water to check to boat bottom but never surfaced. I called your name for a long time with no answer is what I will say.

Go Yen, Journeys

At night I will slip away and come to the cove and then we will hike into the Shark Teeth Mountains and find the Ninja village. They will help us because long ago Grandma and I fed the village with fish after crops of rice went bad.

Yu' uga na swam against the rip tide and even though a strong swimmer she was exhausted reaching the white sand beach. After a rest she used a bushy branch to sweep away her footprints in the sand. She constructed a small hunter's blind out of fallen branches and leaves to blend into the surrounding bushes. Before entering the blind she found a spot next to the pavilion with natural vegetation ground cover. She began digging a secret place for the Red Eye Dagger knowing in the Ninja Village someone would steal or outright take the dagger from her.

The hike was long and hard. And if someone asked her to retrace their trek it would be impossible. She waited outside the village for an hour until Grandpa and another old man came for her. "It will be a hard life but there is no other option" said Grandpa.

From day one each Ninja trainee wore a cloth black hoody covering the head except the eyes and mouth. Numbers were assigned instead of gender oriented names. Her assigned number was seventy seven. The standard uniform disguised the gender of the trainee.

The next years of her life went from bad to worse as Ninja training usually began between the age of five and ten. She became a member of the tribe at age seventeen and was considered much too old, much too old to become a Ninja

Go Yen, Journeys

warrior but Yu' uga na turned her gracefulness into stealthy and fluid movements which defeated others in the use of weapons and strategy. She was often punished by jealous superiors and given little comfort and food but she endured. No one could figure out what her end game was. Survival or Revenge no ninja knew.

During the training the black cat hid under fallen trees but never far away. Once accepted by the Ninja tribe Yu' uga na was allowed to wear normal village attire and marry into the tribe. She was allowed to be placed on inactive warrior status but still wore the same black hood like all tribal women and raised a daughter assigned number one hundred seventy seven and who would give birth to a daughter number one hundred ninety seven.

Yu' uga na , number seventy seven, died of old age as the black cat in the form of Lady in Waiting made sure no arrows, throwing knives, or swords would cause her harm. In the times between the end of her training and her inactive status Yu' uga na participated in many Ninja for hire excursions up and down the length of Shark Teeth Mountains, into both castles around Lake of Love Blood and even the Thousand Sleeping Shipwreck Golden Castle. Her life was not what she desired but she followed the Ninja way to protect the old fishing couple in "Six on ice One on my hook" and her baby girl.

Not much more is known other than she lived between 1692 and 1720. From 1720 to 1845 the genealogy in the tribe was very secretive so an outsider could never know

who beget who. But the inherited facial characteristics of Princess Yūki are undeniable.

Number one hundred seventy seven was born in the tribe and hence more accepted and started training at the normal age. Number one hundred seventy seven excelled in both fighting skills and stealth ways. Number one hundred seventy seven's planning and strategy skills were recognized by the tribal elders and teachers but secretly the daughter longed to live a normal peasant life. Though her mother and the old fishing couple had passed years ago Number one hundred seventy seven knew the life she desired was a far off dream.

But once she grew into a position of martial arts sensei (teacher) and was allowed to become a mother, Number one hundred seventy seven began to form a plan for her daughter, assigned number one hundred ninety seven, to live a normal life. The choice of where and with whom she would leave her newborn would have to be a matter of luck and randomness. Not knowing the ways of normal people, this was a huge challenge because she could not ask questions nor could Number one hundred seventy seven trust any number she knew.

{Naturally}

She would have to write a note generally expaining she did not have money nor family to raise a child. She would have to give Number one hundred ninety seven an acceptable simple name She decided on Harue meaning Springtime Bay because there was no springtime bay

Go Yen, Journeys

association in their dark deep forest. Number one hundred seventy seven walked out during daylight with baby Harue in her arms. Being so out in the open no one had any suspicions and no one asked where are you going?

Number one hundred seventy seven died seven minutes after her return, giving the explanation to the circle of Ninja elders that a sly fox had killed and carried away Number one hundred ninety seven. The year was 1845.

The note found pinned to the baby's blanket read "Her name is Harue and I love her very much but I cannot raise her. I will trust that someone other than I will provide the love and protection I am unable to give. Harue's life will be in danger from forest animals and other dangerous dwellers in the Shark Teeth Mountains."

During a gathering for wild herbs growing in the Shark Teeth Mountains, the last descendant of the Lady in Waiting from the village "Six on ice One on my hook" heard the purring of a cat and found the note and Harue. This woman, in her middle forties, had never married and was without her own children. Her parents were gone and so were any other relatives.

"Harue I shall honor your mother's wishes and carry her note deep within my body" as she chewed and swallowed the note. Then she lifted the baby bundle and hid Harue in her herb basket on her back and carried the baby to her small overnight hut, a safe place outside the village far enough away so a baby crying could not be heard. For her neighbors she made up a story that she was moving to find a handsome husband and left the village. She hiked along

deserted trails zig zagging in a westerly direction through the Shark Teeth Mountains until she stopped at the Buddhist Monastery for a night shelter and meal before continuing down the slopes to Haunted Blood Town. She spoke to a low level local official and asked for assistance in finding a small rice farm she could work with a small dwelling. She really did not have any intent of finding a husband at this stage of her independence. The kind gentle man showed her a small plot of land and hut just below the western slopes of Shark Teeth Mountains. The hut needed a good wipe and sweep but the stove was in good condition. The rice paddy was overgrown with weeds but it was small enough for her to handle but large enough to supply some revenue.

She explained “My young daughter died and her husband and family did not want the burden of another girl leaving a new born to my care. And though I miss my daughter I have been blessed” And so Grandmother began caring for and raising Harue the fifth descendant of Princess Yūki.



Go Yen, Journeys

CHAPTER 4 NATURAL REMEDIES

Harue rested wiping herself dry as Lucky sat on a bed of green moss and licked her fore paws as bear cub was shaking his wet shaggy dark brown fur dry. A fresh water spring, clear as a mirror, gurgled at the bottom of water worn black boulders. The long arms of large overhanging branches provided an umbrella of cool shade but still slight beams of warm sunflower yellow sunlight splattered into star clusters and points of silver among the black boulders.

"You are my loved ones" Harue reminded Lucky and bear cub.

bear cub bowed, lowering his head to Harue, and sniffed the air and turned eyes slightly upward and saw an adult female bear watching the surrounding valleys from a high vantage point. Lucky purred and rubbed her ears against Harue elbow. Harue laid down with hands clasped behind her head she thought grandmother would appreciate this pleasant, peaceful place. Harue took everything in the coolness in the air, the whirling water sounds, the spattering of sunlight shining between tree leaves high above.

Go Yen, Journeys

The first stranger Harue met in the Shark Teeth Mountains was Doctor who gathered seven species each of fungi, flowers, leaves, roots, tree bark, berries, insects, reptiles, fowl, and animal parts if by chance she came upon an animal who died of natural causes.

“My, my, my! It is so nice but strange to greet such as young girl this deep in the wilderness of the Shark teeth Mountains. I would not be surprised if our meeting had occurred on the shopping mall street of my hometown Thousand Sleeping Shipwrecks Golden Castle. I am on my regular seven months hike into the forest gathering Mother nature medicinal cures” said Doctor.

“I have been hiking alone with my companions Lucky and bear cub and have not had a conversation with another human being for months” replied Harue.

Doctor said “It would be a great help to me if you would lend me your two hands to pick the good stuff for cures .If you agree I can teach you the seeking of different life forms from nature to cure people” Doctor was, also, worried about having a young girl wandering in the Shark teeth mountains and all its danger. Doctor did not know about the body guard hiding in Lucky nor the family of bears watching the threesome from a far.

And so Harue accompanied Doctor for several weeks asking questions like

“How does it work? Does it have any bad effects?” and keeping some samples of natural remedies in her backpack.

Go Yen, Journeys

Doctor appreciated Harue's quick intelligence and retention of details. Once said Doctor never had to repeat her instructions or lessons. Doctor advised Harue in all manners of consumption like what should not be eaten at the same meal and what is better eaten raw, hot or cold. Doctor pointed out which natural ingredients prolong life or what could abruptly stop life in seven nano seconds.

"The dead and dried leaves picked of this red berry bush sipped as tea will cause the source of life to abruptly disappear" Doctor describes. As Doctor spoke Harue began to notice a number of small dead stuff lying a few feet around the bush.

"The forest contains a lot of good stuff and a lot of bad stuff but perhaps even the bad things will eventually reveal some hidden curing power"

Because of Harue's interest Doctor constructed and gave a medium size wooden box divided into seven by seven cubicles. Doctor showed Harue which compartments were constructed to keep moist remedies moist while others kept dry remedies dry. Different cubicles smelled like pine or sandalwood and others scents Harue could not name.

One night Doctor asked Harue where her parents were and how did she come to this point in time here in the Shark Teeth Mountains.

"When I first saw you I had a thought that you were a shape changing creature of the forest trying to trick me" admitted Doctor.

Go Yen, Journeys

Harue said "I was raised by Grandmother never knowing my parents. Grandmother had a house and small rice field



near Lake of Love Blood She had the kindest face and a heart of gold. At the age of seven, I found a monk's journal of his travels in the Shark Teeth Mountains and towns". Harue did not reveal finding Go Yen in the same jar. A secret is always meant to remain secret.

Grandmother rarely spoke of where she or Harue's parents were raised. Nor did Grandmother say anything of being a descendant of the Lady in Waiting family and their connection to Princess Yūki. So Harue began to take on Grandmother's life style of hard work, kindness, and most of all the value of privacy.

Harue and a few friends and neighbors took Grandmother to the Buddhist monastery in Shark Teeth Mountains where she was cremated by the monks after a private ceremony by those who caringly carried Grandmother. The ceremony ended with everyone praying seven times "All in life is temporary, fleeting, and fragile" A small gathering with the friends and neighbors was held in the garden of the

Go Yen, Journeys

monastery and warm rice balls wrapped in seaweed and young tender bamboo shoots were shared. After the guests left and Harue thanked the all monks, she began the hike down to the darkened hut carrying an urn containing Grandmother's ashes. As soon as Harue opened the door Lucky ran to her, brushed along her legs and meowed. Harue lay awake in bed all night long and looked at the urn and toward Grandmother's bedding. "Thank you Grandmother"

Harue repeated her grandmother's instructions regarding the small cove and the scattering of her ashes. Harue described how this black cat followed her home from the Red Water Inn and how bear cub became a friend. Doctor soaked in Harue's honesty and humility. When Harue used the Red Eyed Dagger to cut a twig, Doctor asked if she could try the dagger and used it for splitting in halves a thin flower stem without bending and breaking the fragile stem.

"This is a blade of the finest metal and I have never seen such a thin and sharp edge. Such a fine blade could be used to save many lives of my patients" explained Doctor.

Harue saw admiration in Doctor's brown eyes and gave Doctor the Red Eye dagger without hesitation because Doctor admired the sharp and thin blade which could be a weapon for killing or in Doctor's hands an instrument of healing. After Doctor went to bed Harue watched campfire sparks jump high into the purple night sky like rising stars and recalled grandmother's last words

"We are all more than we appear to be" Harue now understood grandmother's wisdom applied to all existence of inanimate objects like the Red Eye dagger and humans. She

Go Yen, Journeys

fell into deep sleep not knowing her real paternal Grandmother, Number one hundred seventeen, lived in a ninja camp and her mother, Number one hundred seventy seven, died to give Harue a life outside the ninja tribe.

“Wish you good fortune and I hope we shall meet again. Please come for a visit and stay at my home. I would welcome your company any time. There is a lot to see and many other girls and boys your age to play with” were the Doctor’s departing words.

Doctor took a westward trail out of Shark Teeth Mountains to Thousand Sleeping Shipwrecks Golden Castle, a great mercantile city on the West coast of Japan.

Harue waved and shouted “Goodbye Doctor Sensei! Thank you again for my wooden box. I will keep adding cures into the correct cubicle as I continue my journey” as she saw Doctor pulling a small wooden cart filled with her gathering of natural remedies. Harue pointed her big toes in the direction of the flying geese.

Harue took a northerly path and came upon the fatal camp site where years ago Teru Teru heard the fluttering wings of a little rice bird and a poisonous ninja arrowhead struck through his heart and his blood staining the ground. Harue saw the remnant rocks arranged in circles of seven camp fires one of which had a small praying stone erected. The inscription read “All in life is temporary, fleeting, and fragile.” bear cub lowered his body not once, not twice, but three times then bear cub stood on rear legs, sniffed and smiled because the scent of home drifted in the breeze from the Never Ending Cave. bear cub led the way with Lucky

Go Yen, Journeys

next in line and Harue following. The forest sound of whistling became greater and greater and then silence.

After the clan saw bear cub in the lead, the companions were welcomed by the Clan of Whistling Bears. During Harue's stay, frequently a family of bears would pause in front of Todoshi's journal and emit a low rumbling growl. bear cub introduced Harue and Lucky to his parents. Living amongst the bears was kind of trippy.

Nothing was done by conversation but only by her observations did Harue learn the bear way. Amongst bears the best way was the bear way. Harue learned simple whistles meaning hello, come, go, and goodbye. There was no need for fire during cold nights. Harue and Lucky would cuddle against the dark brown shaggy coats of bear cub's family. The wind came from deep within the Never Ending Cave chilled by the glacier melt flowing through the veins of the abandoned Earth god of fire vessels that Geologists referred to as lava tubes. Harue learned how to snatch Salmon jumping in the white waters bare handed.

"bear cub, I am so very grateful for you bringing Lucky and I to live in your home and making us part of your family. I have learned so much and Lucky has gained seven pounds eating the salmon and other stuff" said Harue.

She bowed not once, not twice but three times as bear cub parents and other bears nearby were astonished that they had such a distinguished guest carrying the sacred scent of Todoshi.

Go Yen, Journeys

During a gathering of wild deep red and black berries, much redder than the Lake of Love Blood and darker than the moonless night sky Harue was confronted by a wild broad shoulder boar weighing about thirty times seven pounds having dark and dead sinister eyes, and razor sharp seven inch long blood stained curved tusks. Harue found herself between death and doom!

Some would say a rock and a hard place. She heard the trampling upon small branches and dried brown leaves as the wild raging boar raced toward her not unlike a runaway locomotive. Who would know one's death approaching had a rhythm and noticeable beat. bear cub jumped onto the wild boar's black and brown hairy back out of nowhere. The ride came to a screeching stop causing bear cub to fly and somersaulting mid-air through bushes and branches landing against a hard tree trunk, kaboom, knocking bear cub unconscious.

Harue crouched down ready to jump out of the way. "bear cub wake up! Oh! Please open your eyes."

Turning her attention to the sounds of the deathly trampling Harue saw or thought she saw a transparent image of a pink and green kimono and a swinging long sword in an upward blur. Harue's eyes followed the tumbling wild boar's head bouncing seven times before landing at her feet. The top of the boar's head came up to Harue's knees and the sinister really dead eyes stare met Harue's as if to say I will get you the next time.

Go Yen, Journeys

When she looked up, the pink and green image was gone and Lucky stretched her body while digging her claws, one at a time, onto the lifeless wild boar's body.

"bear cub!" Harue shouted as she knelt over bear cub lying in a fetal position. Harue turned and saw Lucky's worried eyes tearing and felt hers watering as well.

Harue said "Don't worry, once I am able to apply Doctor's remedies bear cub will be running about again playing tag with you"

Harue carried bear cub back to Never Ending Cave and laid bear cub upon a bedding of dried yellow grass next to her wooden box of natural remedies. Harue pulled out dried twigs and snapped them into halves releasing a pungent smell like smelling salts. She held the broken twigs under bear cub's shiny but dry nose until bear cub gained consciousness.

bear cub's parents stood nearby while others of the clan waited outside the cave. Lucky laid next to Harue as she applied the sticky substance squeezed from broken grass stems over bear cub's abrasions. The sticky substance helped coagulate the blood. When all remedies had been applied, bear cub stood up while mother bear sniffed and inspected Harue's cures.

In the days that followed Harue's feet would itch for more adventures on the path of whatever and no salve from Doctor's remedies could relieve the fidgeting feet. She decided to leave the comfort zone of Never Ending Cave and continue her adventures on the path

Go Yen, Journeys

of her Whatever. Harue began to salt and dry fish and dry wild berries and edible roots she collected.

“Lucky and bear cub it is time for us to go our separate ways. You bear cub must grow up to be a Whispering bear clan leader and Lucky and I must hit the road jack and go in whatever direction our feet and paws lead us to” said Harue with moistened eyes.

Lucky and bear cub were sadden to part their ways as Harue took the lead with Lucky trailing. Lucky jumped onto Harue’s chest and craddled in her arms Lucky’s head rested upon Harue’s left shoulder looking back at bear cub through moisten eyes. Bear cub was last seen standing on rear legs and wiping tears with fore legs as Harue and Lucky disappeared within the winding Whatever path.

From the top of the next ridge Harue and Lucky could still hear little bear cub’s soft whimpering. A sad kind of whistling.



Go Yen, Journeys

CHAPTER 5 ON THE ROAD AGAIN

The path of whatever came upon the part of Shark Teeth Mountains where the ups and downs became only up. Harue grabbed into grooves in greenish granite and legs pushed up from boulder to boulder while Lucky effortlessly jumped from boulder to boulder. This was like doing level fifteen on the Elliptical. Reaching the next level ledge, snow began to fall and a white fog enveloped the view and Harue's white breath disappeared into the white blind.

Here Harue rested, she could barely see the tips of her fingers as she untied her backpack carrier and unfolded her bedding. Lucky rubbed against her waiting for a dried salted smoked salmon treat. The rock ledge she knelt on felt warm to her surprise. And strangely so did the white fog feel warm against her perfect oval face.

There was no need of a fire for warmth and to see after the white fog floated by. The honey yellow moon and countless stars of the Milky Way beyond the rocky ledge

Go Yen, Journeys

revealed a blanket of bluish clouds occasionally punctured by the snowcapped tops of dormant volcanoes. And there was complete silence no birds chirping, no whistling bears, no bees buzzing, and no flopping of flip flops.

“Lucky this may be the closest we will get to heaven” whispered Harue.

Harue felt at peace and gradually fell asleep while Lucky sat up all night staring across the warm spring waters from which white steam rose. The next morning Harue was awakened by the sounds of splashing and Lucky hissing. Grayish white Snow Monkeys with pink faces were taking their morning bath. Not in a million years had Harue thought she would be this close to Snow Monkeys. Harue took off her footwear and rolled up her trousers and dipped her legs into the warm springs. It felt so good so warm! Then a baby snow monkey came close enough to touch Harue’s wriggling toes.

“Hey you cutie, you always hang around the warm springs to pick up wandering girls like me in this fabulous Shark Teeth Mountain resort?” flirted Harue with the baby snow mountain.

As Harue and Lucky were distracted by baby snow monkey a pair of teenage snow monkeys cleverly dug through the backpack and stole Todoshi’s journal. Lucky’s back arched and growled as the monkeys were caught red handed like in the theft act. The thieves scrambled around the edge of the warm springs with Todoshi’s journal clenched in one monkey’s jaw.

Go Yen, Journeys

“Lucky stay with the backpack while I pursued the pair of hooligans and get back Todoshi’s journal” shouted as Harue ran after the thieves. The Lady in waiting did not make an appearance because she was positive Harue could handle the hooligans.

The brown leather journal lay on the icy white cave floor within Harue’s arm reach but also within reach was an assortment of treasure the two monkeys piled on. A piece of silver or gold or a blue or red precious gem would be placed onto the growing pile. The monkeys would glance at the journal and then the treasure pile, and then another round of silly squawk monkey chatter. Next one of the teenage monkeys would appear with more riches and the same routine would restart. They were proposing to Harue in their own snow monkey mannerism an exchange of the journal for the ever growing pile of treasure. If monkeys could talk the words would have been like

“Hey cutie what you want? You want more treasure for your silly book? Come on name your price Lady, we haven’t got all day!”

This went on for minutes and then hours. The pile became a mound, then a hill, then a mountain of treasure but Harue’s hand did not move off the journal. The girl watched the silly snow monkeys forever bringing in more glam and glittering stuff.

Ah! This was a test. Harue had never seen anything like this, monkeys and treasure. In Harue’s mind it was never a



Go Yen, Journeys

test, for parting with Todoshi's journal or Go Yen or Lucky, would never happen. Never in a million years! It was obvious the two monkeys were only following orders but whose was the question. Come on how smart can two teenage silly snow monkeys be? Who is the tester?

CHAPTER 6 TSURU

A sudden flurry of fine soft snow powder and man the temperature dropped like seventy degrees, with wide winter white wings spreading across the cave and standing above all a great Tsuru appeared. There is nothing more majestic and wiser! The chattering monkeys fell frozen in a crouched stance and silent. With a slight nod of a golden beak and a gesture of a snow white wing tip the two monkeys slowly backed away never turning their backs to the great Tsuru. What was conveyed in the next moments are beyond the language of words or gestures.

The moment was like the empty white spaces between the lines of this story. Emptiness filled the space and yet the emptiness served a purpose. Even beyond mind reading! It

Go Yen, Journeys

was like Harue being Tsuru and Tsuru being Harue. A merging and mingling of two beings, of two different species, and Harue understood the journal was unquestionable hers but the contents belonged to Tsuru, the majestic winter white crane.

A moment after Harue had picked up the journal and pressed it gently against her pounding heart the mountain of treasure transformed into a pile of ice chips. As Harue walked toward the ice cave entrance the cavern was filled with warm morning sunlight and only a puddle of cold still silver water laid where only moments ago stood a treasure trove.

Lucky greeted Harue with a purr as Harue strapped on her backpack carrier, adjusted the worn leather straps of the wooden medicine box on her left shoulder and I Go Yen sat comfortably in her secret pocket.

In what direction will Harue point her big toe? To be sure where the big toe goes so does Harue.



Go Yen, Journeys

CHAPTER 7 UNEXPECTED ENCOUNTER

Harue hiked northerly and seaward on a winding narrow glacier that snaked among the alpine peaks of Shark Teeth Mountains to the West and red iron rich volcanic cinder cones to the East. The name of this glacier was Hebi Samuitai or Cold Snake. Harue carried Lucky in her back carrier as the wind rushing seaward swirled the fine snow powder into tiny white crystal twisters.

"Lucky, keep your paws covering your eyes. The flying ice feels like a thousand small daggers against my face" warned Harue.

She walked along the edges of small lakes formed by the moraines of the receding glacier. As the Shark Teeth Mountains approached its northern end, its head curled to the East isolating a mountain village called Yamasato. Though protected by the mountain gods against freezing Northern winds, the village was occasionally plundered by roving bandits and bear hunters. Often these two groups combined their forces leaving the villagers helpless.

Go Yen, Journeys

Harue's skills for living in the outdoors were learned during her on the job training in the Shark Teeth Mountains. She made a small camp fire during the chilling dark nights on which she cooked the evening black shitake mushroom and red bean meal and kept her warm. But anyone who walked past within seven feet of her camp fire would be unaware of any camp fire glow. So while roving bandits and cruel bear hunters were heard drunken, snapping at each other, cussing expletives, and singing off key in the distant Harue kept to herself. Her guardian the Lady in Waiting in the life form of a black cat lay close to Harue.

Harue learned not to walk along mountain ridges or on the flat valley floor but took to the uneven ground that blended and camouflaged her presence into the valley side. On occasion she would catch the faint whistling of bears carried by the chilling wintery wind for Harue was still in the Shark Teeth Mountains.

"Listen Lucky for our bear friends are calling out to each other" And how Lucky enjoyed bouncing from boulder to boulder, chasing and then pouncing on a dancing yellow leaf, sharpening her claws against the rough, tough, brown tree bark. Frequently Harue would unload her back carrier and sit cross-legged re-reading some part of Todoshi's journal.

"Well Lucky, Todoshi was a learned monk who was worshipped by the clan of whistling bears and his journal is good reading" How she missed grandmother and wished she had known that old Buddhist monk Todoshi.

Go Yen, Journeys

*On the morning of December 21, 1862 Winter Solstice
Harue heard the faint but familiar repeated chanting not
once, not twice, but three times*

*“All in life is temporary, fleeting, and fragile. All in life is
temporary, fleeting, and fragile. All in life is temporary,
fleeting, and fragile”.*

*She cautiously walked over fallen yellow and orange
leaves scattered over the green moss covered boulders as
visions of Todoshi came to mind. Beyond the forest line
upon a flat black rock a thin figure of an old man knelt in
front of a small gray praying stone dressed with white lichen.
Old straw flip flops laid neatly behind him, The elderly white
haired stranger dressed in gray clothes was framed by the
glow of a rising Sun, peeking through pink and lavender
horse tailed clouds.*

*Harue stood and became aware! Aware of everything!
She felt her heart beating, felt each pulse of blood, each
breath was a distinct process of inhaling and exhaling from
beginning to end. She felt the motion of each singular strand
of hair blown by each breath of wind. Yes Harue was in the
moment! She glanced down and saw her reflection floating
on the surface of a pool of pure cold blue rainwater trapped
on top of a bowl shaped black boulder. A perfect oval face
with almond eyes a long neck framed by dark falling hair
upon straight shoulders.*

{Old Man}

Go Yen, Journeys

Harue approached the praying old man then she stood seven feet away as Lucky nudged her head against the old farmer's folded frail legs.

"Such a fine cat and well fed too!" the old farmer said "And where did you come from?" not seeing Harue who stood beyond his peripheral vision. Lucky with a tail straight into the crisp air purred as the old farmer's fragile finger patted Lucky's cold nose.

"Her name is Lucky and she comes from the Red Water Inn and my name is Harue and I come from the Lake of Love Blood" said Harue. This was truer than even she knew.

His eyes opened wider as he held his stare upon Harue's face for old memories raced in his mind of his childhood over seventy years ago.

"Goodness! I don't know you but I know your face. Your beauty brings back a phrase I grew up with as a kid in a small fishing village to the South of the mouth of Hebi River. A perfect oval face with almond eyes a long neck framed by dark falling hair upon straight shoulders." He said followed by a burst of laughter

"I must sound like I am hitting on you young girl" as he continued to laugh. "You are the beautiful spring time bay matching your name."

Oh! My gosh! You are the spitting image of my sister he thought but he did not share.

"I am Ohkubo and I am the head elder of Yamasato Village that cluster of farming houses and rice fields beyond.

Go Yen, Journeys

And so unknowingly, the son of Yu' uga na meets the descendant of his sister. Yes, Harue's secret ninja lineage began with Ohkubo's younger sister. Ohkubo left the fishing village at the age of seven because he always got sea sick when taken out into the rough open sea in the rocking fishing boat. So he ran away, losing all contact with the fishing family. He walked North where he married the youngest daughter of the head clan Yamasato, adopted the Yamasato family name and kept Ohkubo as his first name.

Harue offered her hand to Ohkubo as the fragile farmer began to stand. The curvature of his back was the result of carrying too many heavy bags of rice to market.

"What brings you to this popular place Danketsu (Unity)?" asked Ohkubo with a giggle. Ohkubo explained to Harue "Long ago in the midst of two clans battling each other the Master Monk of Shark Teeth Mountain monastery was asked to mediate an agreement to establish the boundary between the two feuding lords. Master Monk stood erect on this very rock and instructed the lord of the North clan and the Lord of Thousand Sleeping Shipwrecks Golden Castle "From now until the Earth stops spinning, the boundary between your feudal lands will start from this rock and run the along westward ridgeline until said boundary intersects the Sea of Japan coastline and will start in the opposite direction from said rock and run east along the eastern ridgeline until the line intersects the Hebi Samuitai o Cold Snake River and continue until the straight boundary line intersects the Pacific

Go Yen, Journeys

Ocean coastline. I shall name this rock, Danketsu Rokkuni, Unity Rock.”

She felt his presence of humbleness, harmony, and honesty. Harue followed Ohkubo’s footsteps at seven paces back, a respectful distance.

Harue said “I am on the path of whatever after retracing the journey through the Shark Teeth Mountains as written in this journal by a monk named Todoshi”. Ohkubo man turned to see the worn covered journal with a strange wound in its front leather cover.

“As a young one I have heard stories of the traveling monk. Matter of fact my chanting ‘all in life is temporary, fragile and fleeting’ are his words”.

{Mr. Blue}

The old man, Harue, and Lucky walked from the sunflower yellow daylight to under the canopy of trees sheltering the village every different color red, green, and purple magically turned to different shades of blue. Lucky became a blue cat and the monk’s journal brown cover became a dark blue. The arrival at Yamasato Village was in time for the mid-day bluish meal of tea, rice, and pickled vegetable. Ohkubo introduced Harue to seven villagers who sat in a circle around a sunken cooking fire pit and a blue flame.

“Fellow villagers this young girl is my guest along with her pet cat Lucky. She came upon me at Unity praying stone and along the way back said she is willing to exchange her skills in curing animals and humans for a minimal amount of blue food and blue shelter.” said Ohkubo.

Go Yen, Journeys

Harue bowed in blue to each villager as each bowed back in blue. One lady farmer filled a rice bowl with blue rice and steamy hot sky blue tea and served up a small dish of pickled blue vegetables and said please help yourself for extra servings. As the other farmers grew more comfortable with the stranger they would ask questions like

“My boy is not sleeping well and complains of stomach cramps.” And “My chickens use to lay a dozen eggs weekly but now lay only half the amount. Is there a remedy?”

“You should not brag about your plentiful harvest of eggs. The bear hunters and thieves have big ears and might hear.” warned another.

Ohkubo said yes it is about time the thieves and bear hunters will return for their protection tribute. After an hour of small talk concerning the oncoming weather all except Ohkubo and Harue went back to work in the rice fields. Lucky curled on a tightly woven baby blue tatami floor close to the blue warmth of the fire pit.

{Blue Velvet}

During the next couple of days Harue attended to all types of medical needs the blue villagers brought to her. Each time Harue opened a drawer she put together her hands in a praying gesture and bowed to pay respects to Doctor. Her cures were applied to pets, working animals, and people. At times she would accompany Ohkubo to the small praying stone in the hills above the village.

“Harue, how can an old farmer show the appreciation of the whole village for all the magically cures you have given” Ohkubo expressed between his heavy breaths while walking

Go Yen, Journeys

up a steep slippery slope as Harue was grasping his left arm to steady Ohkubo.

Harue replied “I seek no other thanks but the friendship of everyone”. On such a hike into the hills that gradually grew taller into the Shark Teeth Mountains Ohkubo and Harue encountered a scouting party of seven bandits on horses.

“Eh Ojichan, old man, better tell your farmers start packing the village protection fee within the next seven days. And don’t forget the consequences if we aren’t properly greeted and villagers don’t show

{Foxy Lady}

Fox face



appreciation for our protective services. Don’t have any attitude problems!” Said the biggest of the seven bandits who had a fox like face.

Harue stood behind Ohkubo while Lucky hunched her back and hissed. Lucky’s eyes focused on the bigger bandit Fox Face. Fox face’s black as night horse reared as Fox face threw a seven foot long lance at Ohkubo’s feet and Fox Face along with the other bandits laughed.

Go Yen, Journeys

“You have a young daughter, eh, old man. Make sure she serves us plenty sake when we come to collect.”

A dark cold cloud stole away the warm sunshine as the seven bandits disappeared into the dark green forest shadows.

“Stupid! Baka!” whispered Ohkubo beneath his breath and slowly flicked, the Bird, an insulting one finger gesture toward the seven bandits.

Ohkubo knelt in front of the praying stone “All in life is temporary, fleeting, and fragile”. He continued in the privacy of his mindfulness “this includes evil and greed”.

He turned toward Harue to say “Harue, for many years our village has been infected by a plague of roving bandits and bear hunters. The fox faced bandit has become the leader and he is a man to be afraid of. Happiness is a fleeting feeling. Makes you want to hold up your hands in surrender or play make, pronounced ma kay, (dead in English)”

Harue nodded “In my journey through the Shark Teeth Mountains I stayed away and hidden from such gangs. Todoshi wrote of the cruelty and criminal acts of such bandits” and then she prayed beside Ohkubo.

Lucky’s ears pointed high into the sky and warily understood every word of warning.

But where there are bear hunters there are bears! Though both Ohkubo and Harue were unaware of any other living creature, nearby Lucky pointed her tail high when she saw a bear’s silhouette high against a gray sky on a ridge of the Shark Teeth Mountains.



Go Yen, Journeys

CHAPTER 8 THE SEVENTH DAY

As the seven days flew by, faster than a fly, the villagers placed a significant portion of their rice harvest into burlap bags. No one wanted double or triple trouble so everyone was prepared to go hungry in the months to come." Being empty in my stomach is better than being buried" said Ohkubo to the villagers.

Finally the seventh day arrived and so did Fox Face, the bandit leader, and his pillaging pack. Seventy in all consisting of fifty seven bandits and thirteen bear hunters. They all smelled of dried blood of one sort or the other. Like specks of iron attracted to a magnet evil men gather in ungodly gangs. Lucky could remember a familiar human sweaty odor when Fox face got off his horse. Turns out Fox Face is the brother of Tax Collector who met his maker with

Go Yen, Journeys

the revengeful blade the Lady in Waiting. The same evil DNA!

A portion of his gang was outcast subordinates once hired by the evil Chamberlain who tortured and killed the Lady in Waiting. Lucky's claws grew at the thought of finally revenge was at hand. About half of the bear hunters were descendants of the seven bear trappers hired by the circus owner. But one major change was now they killed bears for meat and trophies. Several bear hunters had fashioned head gear from bear heads, the dead bear's snout protruding above the hunter's eyes. Blood stained bear claws hung around their necks as trophies and a few dangled from their ears. They even drank fermented bear blood when a bear was killed. Therefore, their body stinky sweat smelled like a dead bear.

Fox face shouted his complaint "Is this all? Is this all? Damn it! Don't think I am stupid old man. Ohkubo you worthless piece of shit, you are tempting my patience! Where are you damn low life hiding the rest?"

Against his will Ohkubo gave instructions to the villagers to bring out the remaining smaller sacks of rice and dried fish. Harue stood seven feet behind Ohkubo and felt the ground under her feet shake and shudder. The bandits and bear hunters' horses grew restless and jittery. All blue heads of bandits, bear hunters, and farmers turned in all directions like a bunch of blue bobble heads. Was this the beginning of a great earthquake?

Go Yen, Journeys

Those who had sat on horses dismounted as Fox Face saw the mounting fear in the men their eyes widening and mouths opening without words coming out. Lucky ran into the nearest farmer's hut and the Lady in Waiting swiftly floated out toward an astonished Fox Face her katana held



high in her right hand. With a blurred motion of a long steel sword Fox Face's head tumbled into a dirty ditch while his body remained standing not knowing it was already dead. Both arms reached upward to find the head was gone and then the body buckled to its knees.

Kuma the alpha blue bear directed the clan of whistling blue bears into an ever closing circle around the villains and villagers. No bandits or bear hunters would escape. When a blue bear went down seven more replaced the injured or slain blue bear. Ohkubo stood beside Harue as the bears formed a smaller circle as each villain had a neck snapped by a blue bear claw swipe or a blurred blue motion of the Lady in Waiting long sword. Those who wore winter bearskin coats and bear teeth jewelry or carried the scent of stained bear blood suffered a long agonizing death. Legs and arms were first crushed by clenching bear jaws then torsos were ripped

Go Yen, Journeys

open and entails torn out. One by one! Within seven minutes, all fifty seven bandits and thirteen bear hunters were mutilated, blue body parts strewn upon each other like a stack of broken fiddle sticks.

The first thought Harue had was how strange to see blue blood flowing out on the ground. No one had seen the Lady in Waiting only the results of her long sword which farmers credited to the Whistling bear clan. A blue old Kuma stood high on hind legs and emitted a loud long growl, followed by a low growling much like the sound of chanting monks.

The blue bodies of slain bears were carried out in single file past Kuma. Then the younger bears ate or picked up the small body parts and licked up pools of blue blood. Only the slight scent of death that smelled of iron was evident after the cleanup. An old friend bear cub strode up to Harue and hugged her. The last time they were together bear cub was only knee high. Now bear cub was head high and had developed a noble stature. Kuma the alpha bear knelt in front of Harue who carried the scent of Todoshi's journal in her backpack. All other bears adopted the similar praying posture paying homage as Ohkubo and other villagers stood in silent amazement.

Harue explained "Ever since the Battle of the Never Ending Cave where legend says Todoshi and Teru Teru, the high lord of the castle of lake of love blood, fought the seven bear hunters any relic such as Todoshi's journal carries Todoshi's scent. Bears revere this scent and will protect the scent against all dangers "

GO YEN

Go Yen, Journeys

In the aftermath Ohkubo began carving magnificent wooden figures of bears to honor the bears that were killed. Ohkubo taught the younger ones how to carve out bears in all postures standing on hind legs, sitting on a log, catching fish, and kneeling on their fore legs. The carving of wooden bears still goes on today and wooden figures of bears can be bought at Japanese department stores though their story is lost.

I have two wooden bears clinching a salmon and, also, huge male bearing roaring in my house.

{Seventh Son}



Go Yen, Journeys

CHAPTER 9 SEPTUARY

This time Harue pointed her big toe southwesterly toward the coastal city of Thousand Sleeping Shipwrecks Golden Castle with a mind of hooking up with Doctor. Lying on the Sea of Japan shoreline, the sea commerce town sat on a wide bay, the west wind pushed white caped seventeen feet high waves crushing against the breakwater and cliffs below the golden castle. Outside the wide arc of the bay and along the sea cliffs were many sunken pirate ships from the Western empire buried below the unfriendly sea. Pirate ships sailed toward the golden castle like moths flying to a bright light.

In the very early morning ocean mist scented with seaweed smells Harue stood at the intersection of “Maguro” (tuna) street and “Mekajiki” (swordfish) street at the center of “Tsuru no Mura” (the fishing district) neighborhood and saw no one strideing the silent streets. And all the windows and doors were shut. Not a sound of life! Harue found the home

Go Yen, Journeys

and office of Doctor stuck between the business district and residential district. Through the seaward windows odors of dried fish and seaweed flowed in and sounds of children were heard through windows on the mountain side of the structure in better times.

After Harue knocked the door slid open and there stood Doctor in a bonsai garden.

“Harue!” Doctor exclaimed “It is so nice to see you once again girl! Please enter my humble home. Let us have a cup of Tibetan tea with fresh butter and catch up.”

Doctor gave Harue a damp cold face towel to wipe off the travel dust and dirt.

“Here it is so humid please cool your face” offered Doctor.

. Harue described to Doctor how bear cub was healed using the natural remedies given by Doctor. Harue went on describing her encounter with the snow monkeys and the great Tsuru. Doctor’s eyes widened listening to Harue’s stories and the Tibetan tea stirred with local rich creamy butter was really excellent. Lucky had curled to sleep in a warm cozy corner after a feast of fresh raw fish.

As the morning sea scented chill slipped through the slits between the paper sliding doors Doctor began a somber telling of the disastrous event of Thousand Sleeping Shipwrecks Golden Castle. It began when a strange ship with seven huge sails manned with seventy strangers unlike any Japanese, Korean, or Chinese. Doctor described how she learned new medicine from a young foreign Doctor who gave her a new surgical kit and boxes of pills.

Go Yen, Journeys

Doctor inserted "The Red Eye Dagger is still my favorite surgical blade to operate with"

After the strange ship anchored for seven weeks the harbors workers first fell ill, then seven days later store keepers, then seven days later the children and elderly fell sick. Symptoms were high fever and red blotches over all body parts. The foreign ship disappeared one moonless dark night with the outgoing tide in the same manner as the strange ship arrived.

The town inhabitants acted like how white blood cells attack an infection working in unison to cleanse their work places and homes. From the Castle Lord to the ditch digger they all took a part in caring for the sick. Some more than the others but all played a part. Each individual understood we are all connected.

Centuries later in an article of the Japan March 11, 2011 9.0 earthquake, tsunami, and radiation dangers the news writer said the people of Japan are brought up "to do their best, persevere, and suppress their own feelings for the sake of the group" The word gaman was used to describe their endurance.

You would see inhabitants waiting in long lines whether for food and water or some sort of assistance the seven thousand inhabitants of Thousand Sleep Shipwrecks Golden Castle exhibited patience and gaman. When a person felt the need to cry and express sorrow, the flood of emotions were only let out in personal privacy. An outsider would only see gratitude and would never know the pain and suffering by looking into their eyes.

Go Yen, Journeys

The Golden Castle stood high, fishing boats floated, commercial and residential structures still stood, trees and flower gardens still bloomed though a bit disheveled from the lack of human care. Missing was the normal daily foot traffic in the town the click and clatter of wooden flip flops on gravel. And so Doctor and seven times three years old Harue cared for the sick until they could no longer and needed rest. Under Doctor's supervision Harue cured the sick and comforted the family members of the deceased.

Harue said to Doctor "One elderly mother was the image of my own Grandmother and I felt my own sorrow as I held onto her hand until it changed from summer warm to winter cold".

Lucky purred and lay on her lap.

One late night a teardrop glistened on Doctor's left cheek. With moistened eyes Doctor spoke to Harue

"For seven generations, for seven hundred years this place has grown from an original Pleiades of seven families. Each family was headed either by a Shipbuilder, Fisherman, Farmer, Carpenter, Medicine Maker, Tailor, or Sake Brewer. All were connected and no group or individual was above the others. Everyone understood that. Yes, I can trace my family lineage to that Medicine Maker. The Tailor had once explained "Like separate parts of your clothing with only a part of the whole garment you would be exposed in windy weather but sewn together layer by layer you are protected from cold."

Go Yen, Journeys

Doctor revealed how her heart was stolen by the foreign doctor but she understood her obligations to her patients some of whom were not born yet. Harue bowed in respect as her eyes were moistened. Harue did not completely understand when Doctor said literally the foreign doctor had stolen her heart. In matters of love Harue was not an experienced practitioner. But one look at her an oval face with almond eyes a long neck framed by falling dark hair upon straight shoulders, even a fake fortune teller would be able to foretell what the future holds. The last night story Doctor told Harue.

“Harue, once the whole of Japan was enveloped in a Cholera Pandemic. The Lord of Thousand Sleeping Shipwreck Golden Castle summoned me for a meeting with his Elders Council. There was an unexpected visitor from the government. He was the Prime Minister of Japan, His excellency, Minoshitu. He was a man of inexcusable conduct when the pandemic arrived. First he said don’t worry and don’t panic. Otherwise the economy would fall apart then many will be forced to lose our jobs. It is important notice I will also become unemployed if the merchants, bankers, industries manufacturers and shipping, money investors both foreign and domestic. A panicked government is not the image we want to project to the people. We must not say stuff that will only create fear! For then they will throw us out on the street with only the clothes on our backs. We must issue vague announcements that lie somewhere between

Go Yen, Journeys

falsehood and truth. And if a lie is caught by the media then deny, deny, deny! My name is not Minoshitu for nothing!

Tell the media that a vaccine is on its way. But don't tell them the shipment is on a slow boat from China.

Ha,ha,ha. Inform the public that they don't need to worry about getting the disease and to keep going out to the bars, and have a nice sit down meal in your favorite restaurant, or travel to the big city and attend a sumo tournament, concert, or one of those cruises to another island. Have fun." The elders kept silent and still but the Lord got restless and frustrated by the man's inhuman attitude, a total disregard of lives. There were suggestions I made to the council like wearing face mask, staying at home, not getting too close to others, and isolating the sick. These were dismissed by Mr. Minoshitu.

I love that name. It fits the hole so well for the Prime Minister thought the Lord. After the Prime Minister left the castle, The Lord and Elders encircled the Doctor. The Lord pronounced "It is our decision that we will not disperse such false and dangerous lies to the population of Thousand Sleeping Shipwrecks Golden Castle. The original founders of our city would have us commit seppuku (suicide by a short blade disemboweling one's stomach) for such treason against those we serve. The Emperor can request my head on a platter and I would still refuse to pass on such deceitful lies among those we serve."

Doctor and those who volunteered to cure the victims of the pandemic struggled through the death and sorrow until

Go Yen, Journeys

the spread was contained and finally only one was sick. The amount of death was enormous but lives were saved. And so this night of revelations came to an end. Harue last thought was Doctor is both brave and wise.

Doctor described how each of us is like a page in a book of the human story and some only a paragraph and fewer still only a single syllable word like me or I. Each word, sentence, paragraph, and page makes the story whole and a single missing sentence or word could change the final book ending.

Both Doctor and Harue slept well and were awakened by the sounds of children playing in the narrow street.



Go Yen, Journeys

CHAPTER 10 STRONG WATER

In 1875, Harue and Doctor's younger cousin became parents to a daughter. The never aging black cat Lucky dutifully continued to keep the Lady in Waiting's promise to forever protect the women of Princess Yūki's lineage. During the period of searching for a name within a dream talk with old Todoshi she heard him chant

"Strong like water, Water cleans, Water purifies, Water gives life, Water is patient."

The Japanese name Mizukoi meaning Strong Water was given to the daughter born as the sixth generation of Princess Yūki. Harue held the new born in a shallow tub filled with warm water while Mizukoi splashed water all over the floor. Harue whispered "Mizukoi. Be kind to your namesake so it will teach you to be strong like the water that can turn a mountain into a mole hill." She grew up well liked by other kids on the block and in school she excelled. When she was in her early teens she began to help with the household chores and simple care of patients. On home

Go Yen, Journeys

visits she would cleanse the bedding and straighten out the house when time allowed. All the patients appreciated her help. Back at the office Mizukoi would sterilize medical instruments and refill pills and herbs, gauze and bandages. When patients paid for doctor services with fruits, vegetables, and poultry Mizukoi took what they required and gave their neighbors and poorer ones the rest. Harue would compliment Mizukoi "You are such a caring and responsible young lady I wish there was a way to have you learn about modern medical procedures."

During her childhood years there were harvesting hikes into the Shark Teeth Mountains with her mother to gather natural remedies and days spent dutifully reading to Doctor who required plenty of rest these days.

Mizukoi had a worthy companion, Lucky, on all of her natural remedy gathering hikes into the Shark Teeth Mountains. It was during her seventh hike Mizukoi encountered a bunch of no good thieves and murderers. It began with a question asked by a thin weasel looking man. "Do you have anything of value that is worth the price of your life?" "Mister Weasel stared down at Mizukoi and rubbed his craggy lined chin bristled with peppered whiskers. Mizukoi stood still and stared back and answered "Mister I doubt what I have in my wooden boxes are of any worth to you because the contents are easily available to you to gather in the Shark Teeth Mountains".

All the while Lucky with her ears pointed backward, arched back, and hissed at the weasel stranger smelling a stinking perspiration oozing danger. Mizukoi throughout her

Go Yen, Journeys

young age never had sensed fear of anything or anyone so she humbly said "Please forgive me sir for I have nothing of value for you and I must continue my harvesting of cures for my mother's and doctor's patients waiting in Thousand Sleeping Shipwrecks Golden Castle. With that said she continued down the sloping trail and soon forgot the incident of Mister Weasel. But Lucky kept being aware of any strange sounds or scents.

And lucky for Mizukoi that the Lady in Waiting hid. Mister Weasel found his gang of six of the ugliest, foul smelling, filthy clothed odd men or better described as odd creatures of the mountains. Mr. Weasel being the leader said this is what we are going to do to that wandering girl. First we will track her down and tie her up. Then we will demand a ransom from her mother and doctor in Thousand Sleeping Shipwrecks Golden Castle. Running a doctor business must make them plenty rich. And even if they don't have the money I am pretty sure the Lord of the Golden Castle will open up his vault and dish out all the gold coins we demand for ransom. But not before we get the girl.

And so Mister Weasel and cohorts started smelling out Mizukoi's trail with Mister Weasel in the lead because of his huge protruding nose. In all they looked like a creeping centipede weaving down the sloping trail. But their legs did not move in rhythm, ka plonk, ka pomp, ka bunk, certainly not a natural sound of the forest. While Mizukoi was bending over and inspecting the ground cover adjacent to the trail and a small trickle of spring of water, Lucky slipped away and

Go Yen, Journeys

the Lady in Waiting floated toward the lurking line of thieves and murders.

With a swift unseen horizontal slice of her blade off fell Mister Weasel's head tumbling down the side of the valley while a fountain of red bright blood gushed from his neck. And while holding the blade with a firm grip, the Lady in Waiting cut the remaining six marching in line into halves. The lower halves remained standing seconds after the top halves toppled over the valley side. Only then did the lower halves fall forward on the trail. And all this happened without Mizukoi having any inkling of the gruesome event that had taken place no more than seventy feet up trail from her.

"Lucky where did you wander off to? You know the Mountains are filled with dangerous animals and you would be a fine feast for them." as she gently tapped Lucky's nose for emphasis. The Shark Teeth Mountain had seven less criminals when Mizukoi and Lucky returned to Thousand Sleeping Shipwrecks with medicinal cubicles filled with natural remedies for Mother and doctor to prescribe.

While the little girl Mizukoi grew up to become a teenager, Japan was involved with an expansion program to conquer lands rich in natural resources like oil and coal.

"Doctor, have you taken notice that many young men have been drafted to fight wars in Mongolia and China?" said Harue. "I just came back from paying a house visit to the fishing warehouse and hardly anyone was working. The old supervisor informed me seven of his young workers were

Go Yen, Journeys

forced to be become soldiers. "My heart was saddened. I have heard the same story when I attend to patients who come in and others who I have paid a home visit. I also have seen a lot more troop carrier ships moored in the harbor. These ships are so huge they make our fishing boats appear to be toy boats floating in the furo (Japanese soaking tub filled with hot water)." One elderly veteran of both over sea battle in Korea and in country fighting between our castle and others who encroach across our borders whispered in my ear "Where have of the young men gone?" My eyes teared up and I just could not answer his question even though I knew where the men were buried or ashes casted into the sea."

For the last couple of years Doctor and the foreign ship Doctor have been exchanging letters. The foreign Doctor had set up his practice in America, Los Angeles, California to be exact. He writes that besides having to manage his clinic, he also teaches the amazing medical advancements at a marvelous Medical School. Doctor writes back how Harue and daughter Mizukoi have continued to cure the sick and comfort the dying in Thousand Sleeping Shipwrecks Golden Castle. From the exchange of letters the opportunity of Mizukoi going to the Medical school in Los Angeles, California is born.

Although travel outside Japan is banned by the Japanese government officials Doctor calls in a favor from a Captain of an American merchant ship and arranges the secret passage of Mizukoi to California.

Go Yen, Journeys

Even at the start of the twentieth century the seeds of prejudice were planted against Asians and growing which culminated with President Franklin D. Roosevelt on February 19, 1942 signing Executive Order 9066 incarcerating those of Japanese Ancestry including Japanese American citizens to concentration camps. At the start of the century on May 7, 1900 Mayor of San Francisco James Duval Phelan was quoted

“Chinese and Japanese are not bona fide citizens. They are not the stuff of which American citizens can be made.”

{Sailing}

So when Mizukoi got off the American merchant ship at the port of Los Angeles she was given a student visa and Foreign Doctor was her sponsor. She was housed with an elderly Japanese couple, the Otake family house in Orange County. Mr. Otake had a yardwork business and Mrs. Otake still worked as a housemaid for an upper middle class family.

During Mizukoi’s stay Mrs. Otake, while in the privacy of her house, was the more vocal person informing Mizukoi of the two major restrictions in California for Asians: number one was Asians were not able to own land; number two Asians were not allowed to marry Caucasians. Also, Mrs. Otake said “Bow and be silent and you will avoid trouble. In America, Asians cannot be expected to excel or be promoted to work a higher level of responsibility than a fellow Caucasian.”

“My! This is a really a different world from Thousand Shipwrecks Golden Castle” replied Mizukoi.

Go Yen, Journeys

"Now I am not sure why Doctor or mother would have placed me in such a bad situation. I am having a rough time wrapping my head around these revelations." Then she added "I guess there is no turning back because I have no ticket for going back and I cannot disgrace mother's and Doctor's good intentions. Thanks for the advice so I will always bow and step aside when approached."

In 1942 Mr. and Mrs. Otake were incarcerated without any trial, spent months living in a horse stall at the Santa Anita Horse Racing track while concentration camps were being built in mid America. Eventually they were imprisoned at a so called the Relocation Center Heart Mountain in Wyoming. There was no warmth of heart since the center was surrounded by barb wire and soldiers in towers with search lights and their rifles pointed inward toward the Japanese inhabitants. Mrs. Otake died in camp and Mr. Otake was imprisoned until 1946 and would die unable to forgive the American government for the death of Mrs. Otake.

During the early semesters, Mizukoi would always bow and be quiet when attending a class that Doctor instructed or when assisting Doctor in the clinic. Having grown up in California Doctor had suspicions of Mizukoi's behavior. She was not asking expected questions or raising her hand to answer class questions he knew she had the answer for. One morning before going over his appointment schedule Doctor asked Mizukoi,

"Why aren't you asking questions or raising your hand to speak up in class? I know you know the correct answer."

Go Yen, Journeys

“Doctor, I do not desire to appear to be smarter than the other students or staff in your office. I don’t want to rock the boat” Because they would in turn not only disrespect me but also you.” replied Mizukoi.

“Yes there are people here that discriminate against Asians but in my eyes and hopefully eventually in your own eyes you will see yourself here as their equal or better, being smarter.” said the Doctor.

From that morning Mizukoi applied her study and work habits to the maximum overdrive effort by asking questions and raising her hand. There were times she would extend her answers to the next level so eventually fellow students or staff members at Doctor’s office would ask her questions on what is next. On occasions while riding a bus, walking between classes, or treating a patient she could see a hint of prejudice in their eyes or hear whispers as they passed her.

She would repeat the mantra “Strong like water, water cleans, water purifies, water is patient.” And that would allow the confrontation to evaporate into thin air. Her goal was to get a Medical degree and complete her internship at Doctor’s office.

She wrote a letter home to her mother. Harue thanked her for this opportunity to study western medicine. Mizukoi adds “I miss cuddling with Lucky and going on my hike through the Shark Teeth Mountains gathering natural remedies. Doctor is such a vessel of the western medicine and sharp on running a business side of the clinic. He is so supportive of my learning and navigating the different American culture.”

Go Yen, Journeys

From 1897 to 1902 Mizukoi devotes her time assisting foreign Doctor at the clinic and attending studies at the medical school. After one year in America Mizukoi adopts an English name Julia. Julia is a title of a song that drifted into her mind one day at a coffee shop called Moonstruck. Julia is courted by many because of you already know of her perfect oval face, almond eyes, a long neck framed by dark falling hair upon straight shoulders.

Once, in a while, on a lunch break walk with a Caucasian Intern she heard "Well don't they make a cute couple" It was a sarcastic tone of voice, a teenager. She would always remember the restrictions, whether cultural or official, for Asians and avoid such relationships. Her interactions would then be confined on only a professional working level.

Julia graduates from medical school and interns at the foreign Doctor's clinic for one year. Mizukoi is anxious to return and be called by her Japanese birth name and so informs Doctor

"Doctor I am beyond grateful for your mentorship and generous opportunity for a western medical education. But I feel it is time. It is my time. It is time for my return to Japan and Thousand Sleeping Shipwreck Golden Castle to continue my mother's practice" said Mizukoi.

Foreign Doctor replied "You know I and all my colleagues would readily offer you a position in their practice leading to an eventual partnership. And you already are well aware of the great number of Japanese American living in our vicinity".

Go Yen, Journeys

"My deep roots are in Japan and so the fruits of my labor need to fall there" And so in 1903 foreign Doctor arranges a first class voyage return to Thousand Sleeping Shipwrecks Golden Castle.

{Homeward Bound}

The morning she left the Otake residence she bowed not once, not twice, but three times to both Mr. and Mrs. Otake. She purchased a very old bonsai tree for Mr. Otake and a flower arrangement of white roses for Mrs. Otake and then she knelt before the butsudan (small Buddhist altar kept in the home).and the Otake's ancestor memorial tablet, lit incense and prayed.

At age seventy Doctor spends the morning caring for patients and the afternoons writing to foreign Doctor, secretly reading Todoshi's journal, and taking frequent naps. Since Harue's first encounter with Doctor in the Shark Teeth Mountains, Harue learned to prescribe natural remedies and manage the business side of Doctor's office.

One late night Doctor and Mizukoi were preparing their bedding while a single candle barely lit the room. Doctor said "Mizukoi you have a choice between a scary bedtime tale or a romantic tale involving a girl about your age." Mizukoi answered " Doctor I choose the scary one of course!"

"I should have guessed. Well let me tell you the story of a young seven year old patient of mine many years ago, before you were born. One day as the town was colored by early twilight darkness the boy was brought into our clinic. The mother explained her boy had killed a bird while the

Go Yen, Journeys

black bird with yellow tail and wing tip feathers sat on top a bamboo brace for our string bean vines. He must have felt very bad because he lifted the limp bird and cried while holding it in his left hand. He recalled feeling the pain of a small splinter and I saw it. Since it was so small, I told the boy to scrub that hand hard while taking his bath. The pain went away but I could see the tiniest remainder of the splinter. And if you asked me what it looks like, perhaps a piece of wood or a thorn. But I would tell you that to my naked eyes it looked like a tiny bird feather."

The boy nodded in agreement. We went to our small village doctor who placed a hard plaster cast over the boy's lower left forearm and hand. The mother motioned her right hand over her left arm showing Doctor the area involved.

"The village doctor instructed my boy to keep the cast warm and showed the boy how to tuck the arm into the front of his kimono. Now weeks have passed without improvement. And now we sit before you for a cure."

"My goodness young man you have gone through a lot. The first thing we must do is get rid of the plaster cast. Don't be scared while I use my small saw to cut it open." I went through the cast inch by inch very slowly until I could squeeze my fingers into the sawed spacing. I opened the cast with a quick jerking motion and to my amazed eyes a black bird with yellow tail and wing tips flew into the examination room.

The mother screamed while the boy just curled into a ball while this Black bird circled the room seven times and then flapped its way into the dark twilight sky." The mother quickly

Go Yen, Journeys

grabbed up the boy and ran out the door. And I could never come up with a reasonable medical explanation. But that is not the end of the story, years later I heard that bird boy, my personal nickname, and the mother had become so destitute she turned her son over to a travelling circus for eating money and one month rent.”

Doctor continues “The story goes the cute boy grew up normal except for one significant anomaly. His hand from which the black bird with yellow tail and wing tips was born never grew any muscles. Instead the hand shrunk to the finger bones, becoming scaly and leathery and the finger nails grew narrow but strong much like hawk’s talons. He was a thing to see in the sideshow of the circus. In Haunted Blood Town, a teenager who was scared by bird boy in front of his girlfriend sneaked behind a circle of boozers and threw a jagged piece of rusted metal slamming into bird boy’s skull. Thus it seems that the bird the bird boy killed finally got its ultimate justice. Mizukoi could not shut her eyes all night long.”

The inhabitants benefited from the traditional way of natural remedies and the foreign ways of pills and surgery the skills and knowledge bought back by Mizukoi. Harue introduces Mizukoi to Todoshi’s journal and speaks of the journal as a holy relic and a travel guide of the Shark Teeth Mountains and how the Clan of Whistling Bears worships the journal as a relic of a great holy hero.

Harue warns Mizukoi of evil forces that would steal and use the journal for evil deeds. Harue tells the story of how Kuma and the clan of whistling bears rescued Yamasato

Go Yen, Journeys

village from the bandits and bear hunters to a wide eyed Mizukoi sitting on a zabuton (a square flat floor cushion).

As Mizukoi carries the majority of patients Harue often sits with aging Doctor and creates card size flower arrangements using a variety of weeds and small common garden flowers that usually people would ignore and step on. Here is one of Harue's creations.





Go Yen, Journeys

CHAPTER 11 ANOTHER ISLAND, ANOTHER COUNTRY

In the fourth year of the Twentieth century, twenty seven year old Mizukoi married a descendant of the Tailor family, one of the original seven founders of Thousand Sleeping Shipwrecks Golden Castle. Sooner than later, Mizukoi gave birth to a boy and then two years later a girl named Reimiko.

Ah! The seventh generation of Yūki, the Princess of Lake of Love Blood Castle, continues to be an oval face with almond eyes, long neck framed with dark falling hair upon straight shoulders. And the Lady in Waiting continues her promise in the form of Lucky, hairy black cat with long pointed ears

Go Yen, Journeys

As she goes, older Mizukoi spends more time in front of the home altar praying and burning incense for Mr. and Mrs. Otake and American Doctor wishing them well. And she begins to turnover items of the family heirloom to the children.

Mizukoi gives Reimiko Todoshi's journal and the Red Eye dagger. Mizukoi demonstrates the quick and slow movements of the Red Eye dagger to defend against villains. Mizukoi gives Go Yen to Kazutaka, the son, believing he would make better use of a magical coin in the mercantile business importing American goods to make Japan part of the new modern world. He is instructed never to spend the coin for anything.

For Mizukoi's death I actually know the exact day, year, and time of her death Thursday, December 7, 1944 at 1:33 p.m. local time. The Tonankai earthquake and associated tsunami killed 1,223 and injured approximately 20,000.

On Wednesday, December 6, 1944 Mizukoi travelled to a small fishing port approximately half way between Haunted Blood Town and Thousand Sleeping Shipwrecks Golden Castle. As usual every month someone from the Doctor's office would pay a visit and attend to the medical needs of the small fishing port of Nakaba de (halfway) harbor. Usually the doctor with the lightest load that week would make house calls to those who had sent requests the week prior to or had posted notes on a bulletin board at the harbor master shack. On that day the doctor stepped off the mid-sized freighting ship used to supply the associated village

Go Yen, Journeys

with containers of rice, cloth material, casks of sake, toys, construction supplies. No Amazon Prime back then. The population was about seven hundred which included husbands who either were fishermen or fishing boat builders or boat patchers, wives that worked at the fish cannery, worked at home repairing damaged fish nets, working at the town's child care facility. The village was too small to afford a resident doctor of its own. So on the day before the Tonankai Earthquake Mizukoi gathered whatever medical equipment and remedies patients required, went early to bed and woke up early to pack up any personal needs she thought might come in handy. Lucky the black cat was acting kind of weird that morning so Mizukoi decided Lucky would keep Reimiko company in the office. Mizukoi had no idea that Lucky's weirdness was the animal instinct to foretell an earthquake.

(Red Sails in the Sunset)

The boat ride one way was just four hours long both going and returning but at times she expected choppy windblown waves with a lot of ups and downs boat motion so Mizukoi ate some raw ginger to settle any nausea, sea sickness. She had noted her list of patients numbering eight had described: symptoms of fever, a bashed thumb, wheezing, a child with a sore head and stomach, a pregnant woman, a foot injury caused by a falling crate, a fishing hook caught in the back of a young inexperienced boat apprentice, and an elderly man who had described multiple

Go Yen, Journeys

complaints. Mizukoi would have a full day of doctoring but hopefully would be completed and able to board the return voyage at 6:00 p.m. to Thousand Sleeping Shipwrecks Golden Castle. If there were no other requests posted on the Harbor Master's bulletin board she definitely felt sure of sleeping in her own bed tonight.

At exactly 1:35 p.m. on December 7, 1944 the 8.1 magnitude earthquake later named Tonankai shook the ground and caused a tsunami. The wooden fish cannery swayed violently, panic spread among the cannery workers. Some inhabitants were trapped in burning homes. The ocean waters receded leaving four tuna boats on the dry seabed while a couple of boat owners tried to untie the mooring ropes. Children at the day care were sent home and for most this meant certain death because the day care building was built farther inland from the homes children were sent to.

At the time Mizukoi was attending to the boat apprentice with the fishing hook in his back. "There that was not bad" Mizukoi confidently assured her patient. She began to feel the ground shaking and watched as her medical instruments fall off the table. The boat apprentice turned to her with a scared expression. Outside the home both heard the screaming of women and crying children and rough instructions shouted out by men. Before Mizukoi could save herself the third tsunami wave sped through the harbor and village. The sound of the moving water was like what the water from your shower head going full blast! The shouting and screams were silenced by the third wave. Mizukoi

Go Yen, Journeys

realizing she had no chance of out running the massive wave just stood at the door watching the wave coming to her carrying death and debris toward her. Mizukoi was only halfway through her prayer "All in life is tempor...." As the wave robbed her of her last breath. It should be noted that she held the hand of her last patient. A last act of caring.

The Doctor's office of Thousand Sleeping Shipwrecks Golden Castle now had only one staff doctor, Reimiko, whose patients were in the following days, victims of the Tonankai Earthquake and Tsunami and the war, in its third year, against America and allies. At the end of each day after December 7, 1944 Reimiko desperately went through the papers left in the stack of papers searching for any news of the recovery of Nakaba de (halfway) harbor, hoping that Mizukoi would be found alive or at worst her body would be listed among the tsunami victims. By the fourth day Reimiko went into Mizukoi's bathroom and found an old hairbrush with strangles of Mizukoi's hair and reverently placed them into a pure white envelope. She could barely keep her emotions under control as she wrote a letter Kazutaka, her brother, who was in Hawaii, the Big Island. She constantly wiped the tears following down her cheeks. She wrote of their mother's legacy of never stopping to caring for her patients, even when the danger demanded the ultimate sacrifice. She wrote that she had planned a funeral service at the small sheltered cove north of "Six on ice One on my hook" and that by the time you received this letter the seventh day remembrance ceremony would have been held.

Go Yen, Journeys

She left Thousand Sleeping Shipwrecks Golden Castle unannounced early one morning carrying a simple wooden box containing a simple pearl white jar holding Mizukoi's hair ashes and Lucky, the black cat, in tow. Both wept. Days later after her journey by route through the Shark Teeth Mountains Reimiko and Lucky stood next to the white sand of the small sheltered cove. When she turned toward the ruins of the pavilion she was greatly surprised to see people lined up at both tops of small gulch and others stood on both pathways down to the cove. Her breath was taken away from the silence of respect and reverence. From the crowd the current Master Monk approached Reimiko in full gala murmuring a Buddhist chant. He took the pearl white urn from Reimiko's caring arms. Placing the urn on a purified white pine platform he sat upon the white sands and began the ceremony. Reimiko knelt down on her knees with Lucky lying down with her head between her front paws.

The Master Monk placed a small simple wooden table in front of him and placed Mizukoi's urn on top with a small wooden tablet, a small bronze bowl, and a somewhat bigger bronze bowl, and lit an incense stick in the bowl, he looped his prayer beads (Juzu) over his right hand and began a Buddhist chanting. Reimiko bowed and then lit three incense sticks, one for Kazutaka, her brother in Hawaii, one for Lucky, and one for herself, then bowed again. Throughout the attendance all bowed in respect, murmuring their words of prayers with hands clasped. During the service Master Monk spoke of Mizukoi's life purpose of serving the sickly in Thousand Sleeping Shipwrecks Golden Castle. Never once

Go Yen, Journeys

considering anything else. He recalled that Mizukoi had gone to America, now Japan's enemy, to learn modern medicine and then came back to her roots to cure her neighbors. Mizukoi always caring for others even when death called upon her. Reimiko wiped her tears dry. In the crowd all cried. At the end Reimiko stood up as instructed and picked up Mizukoi's urn and then spread what little ashes from Mizukoi's strands of hair. When the service was concluded hundreds went down to offer lit incense sticks into the bronze bowl and when the bowl was filled, the Master Monk instructed others to place their incense sticks in the beach sand. Reimiko graciously bowed to each and every one. In the silence when everyone had left and only her and Lucky climbed the path back to "Six on ice One on my hook" she saw an image of an old lady floating above the beach who said "We are all more than we appear to be."

In 1927, a few foreigners or gajin had built foreign styled homes on the leeward slopes of Shark Teeth Mountains. The most impressive furnishing was the western style toilet that could flush away waste by just by applying pressure to a lever. The other inventions were the rifle and pistol diminishing the sword and dagger and so diminishing the Samurai status. These were the families of shipping businesses, large mercantile and department s stores.

A few became patients of Mizukoi's daughter Reimiko because of her gentle nature and her highly regarded westernized medical reputation. One evening at the end of a full twelve hour working day, Reimiko reconciled patient's payments. While separating the coins into stacks of equal

Go Yen, Journeys

value a coin about the size of your thumbnail fell onto the floor with a clink and a clank. Reimiko watched the coin spinning on its thin shiny silver edge. The coin was seemly on a path to be lost amongst the cobwebs and dead roaches between the bottom of storage cabinets and the black wooden floor. But the coin's path began to curve and loop around back toward Reimiko.

As gravity and floor friction weakened the centrifugal force of the spinning coin the spinning symmetry began to wobble. The wobbling coin rolled and rubbed against the wooden grain saying

"Keep me, keep me, keep me, kee.. ke...k"

The coin landed Lady Liberty face up on the wooden floor seven inches away from Reimiko's toes. It was an American V nickel minted in 1910 often called the Victory nickel. When no one was around Reimiko would take out the Victory nickel and spin the coin and listen to the coin's reply to her question. If one would have entered the room by accident they would think she had lost her mind for only Reimiko could hear the coin's words.

One night all alone in her bedroom Reimiko spins the talking nickel and ask the question "What will the world be like in the future?"

The coin replies "Many wars will occur. At the end of one war two great fireba... will die end the Jap.... ese Emp....." as the coin wobbled and finally laid flat on the floor.

That was the last time Reimiko spun the nickel and asked a question. The next morning Reimiko hammered a cold

Go Yen, Journeys

steel chisel into the coin's face splitting it almost into halves. After that Reimiko made sure the coin could not be spun on its edge. She tried this many times before Reimiko stood at the edge of the sea cliff looking down at the huge waves crashing against the jagged rocks below she took a deep breath and threw the American V nickel as far as she could over the cliff. Reimiko had decided no one should have the power of know what the future holds. So the coin sunk among the sharks and shipwrecks below and disappeared into a seventy feet deep crevasse never to be spun again.

Against Mizukoi's wishes Reimiko travels overseas to understand foreign cultures. How could Mizukoi complain when she knew of a very similar journey the monk Todoshi did through the Shark teeth Mountains. Reimiko visited the ports of Manila Bay in the Philippine islands, India then traveled a land route through central India, climbing the high Himalayas across Tibet. Her route continues by camel on the Silk Road into southwestern China heading northeast through farming communities governed by warlords.

Whenever homesick, Reimiko unfolds the secret cloth pouch hiding Todoshi's journal and the Red eye dagger. She reads of how Todoshi encountered Teru Teru in the Shark Teeth Mountains and of Teru Teru's death by a ninja arrow while not knowing she was the seventh generation of his daughter's lineage.

It was during camp fire stories along the camel trade route Reimiko began to make the connection of the recounting of Genghis, the Khan of Khans invasions and the Red eye dagger. This was the stuff you cannot make up but

Go Yen, Journeys

believe it was true. It all fell into place. The red oval sparkling sapphire and the seven inch long silver blade is more than it appears to be. After she started to believe, Reimiko's hand would shake as she slid her fingers along the seven inch silver blade.

The wonder of it all!

While growing up Reimiko would assist her mother Mizukoi during surgery, so Reimiko only knew of the lifesaving qualities of the Red Eye Dagger and nothing of the magical powers of conquering countries. For all the past months she believed it was not a real sapphire but fake. Because she knew the military and government officials in Japan were conquering other countries having natural resources like oil, coal, and iron the Red Eye Dagger should not fall into the hands of Japanese military.

Reimiko switches from camel riding to horseback riding into the rolling green hills of Mōyukikokoku or Mongolia. Upon reaching the heart of Mongolia under a moonless clear sky Reimiko reaches the decision not to keep the Red Eye Dagger.

Reimiko whispers under her breath "This is the right thing to do and mother will support my reasoning."

So in 1940 after seven years of travel Reimiko returns to Thousand Shipwreck Golden Castle with only Todoshi's journal.

But given the political environment, leaving the Red Eye Dagger to its rightful owner was best. So strange, the split, American V nickel tumbles beneath the white caps of waves breaking against the sea cliffs of Thousand Sleeping

Go Yen, Journeys

Shipwrecks Golden Castle while the Japanese Go Yen will travel to Hawaii and France and to Texas and then back to Hawaii.

It is just short of a year until December 7, 1941 the Pearl Harbor attack happens, as Reimiko takes over her mother's doctor's office in Thousand Sleeping Shipwreck Golden Castle. As she hears more frequently news of Japanese waging war she nods yes I made the right decision. Unquestionable! Through the years from 1941 to 1945 she cures only the elderly, children, and female inhabitants but no young or middle aged men for they have gone to war. She often whispers to herself "where have all the young men gone?"

In the months after August 1945 Reimiko would see the survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki Atomic bombings. She would attempt to cure but only comfort the suffering and dying during the day and cry at night unable to save her patient's lives and she chanted

"All in life is temporary, fleeting; and fragile". Her beliefs and protest of war grew stronger as she aged and Reimiko adopted an English middle name Peace.

{Give Peace A Chance}

Reimiko only marries later in life when she finds a suitable husband, a sake brewer, with similar views against war. She becomes the last of women born from the Princess Yūki lineage because she gives birth to two sons.

In 2001 at the age of eighty seven Reimiko gives the elder son Todoshi's journal. She retraces in her memories her overseas adventures and her decision made in 1940.

Go Yen, Journeys

They listen and nodded with wild amazement with wide eyes of the Red Eye Dagger and Japan's war history. These were family held stories starting from a smoke filled ger in East Persia to the execution of the Lady in Waiting, to Yobushi, the Fist, instructing Yu' uga na how to defend herself, to Harue's gift to doctor. While in Mongolia Reimiko's path and the great, great, great, granddaughter of the lineage of the secret holder who revealed the location of Genghis, Khan of Khan's burial site intersected. Reimiko saved the secret holder's grandfather's life but while he was delirious he kept mumbling the name Genghis. When grandfather gained his strength Reimiko revealed that in her secret pouch she believes she has been carrying the Red Eye Dagger given to her by her mother.

"The Red Eyed Dagger has been a treasure in my family for generations but only until you revealed its true power while you were inches away from death did I know the dagger's way." reveals Reimiko.

Wide eye and with shaking hands grandfather watches Reimiko unfold a blue and green silk cloth revealing the Red Eye Dagger. Reimiko then told the old man of her decision to return the Red Eye Dagger to Genghis, the Khan of Khans, burial site. Grandfather guided Reimiko for seven days amongst rolling green hills passing herds of yaks and isolated gers.

"Your land is a treasure all green and beautiful with its rolling hills below the clear blue sky. Definitely a good place to raise a family without the distractions of city life. "said Reimiko.

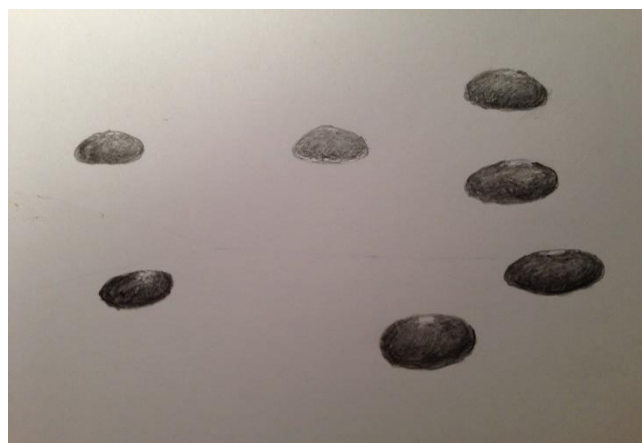
Grandfather replied “I am blessed with a good life and family”

After reducing the seventh campfire to embers Reimiko holding onto grandfather’s right shoulder walked seven hundred and seven paces blindfolded. She could feel beneath her toes the slight rise of a hill. There upon the northern slope of a small hill of no significant height laid seven smooth insignificant stones arranged in a pattern only familiar to an astronomer the constellation known as the hunter or as the Pleiades.

The Star cluster Pleiades designated M45 consist of seven stars also known as the seven sisters named Akyone, Maia, Sterope, Taggeta, Caleano, Electra, and Merope. (Greek names). M45 is near the bull constellation Tarus.

In eighth century Japan they were only counted as six stars and called it Mutsuraboshi. In modern Japan the common name is Subaru meaning coming together and depicted as the automobile company Subaru icon.

{Stones}



Go Yen, Journeys

After Reimiko placed Red eye dagger into Genghi's skeletal right hand the secret holder replaced the soil and laid back the green grass upon the site making it undistinguishable among the surroundings.

"Secret holder felt the returning the Red Eye Dagger has lifted a huge weight from my shoulders. The Red Eye Dagger was passed onto me by my mother who used its strong and slender blade to perform surgical operations of her patients in Thousand Sleeping Shipwrecks Golden Castle. Mother does not know of my returning the Red Eye Dagger but will surely understand my motives to so do. Mother would not have any knowledge of the power that the dagger owner would possess. " informed Reimiko.

"It is destiny you and I shared the same campfires and perhaps it was the voice of the Khan himself speaking while I was delirious making you aware of the dagger power and history" Replied, grandfather, the secret holder.

The last act of the secret holder was picking up each smooth stone and flinging stone after stone in different directions forever sealing the secret location of Genghis, the Khan of Khans skeletal hand holding the Red Eye Dagger. Unknown to the secret holder the seven stones thrown in a random way gathered themselves into the same configuration as before but only as a larger pattern only detectable from high in the sky.

"Young and wise Missus your righteousness is beyond belief and greater than the extent of all the Mongolian plains and deserts for the return of the Red Eye Dagger. While you

Go Yen, Journeys

placed the dagger in the Khan's hand I searched and chose an appreciation token for you. Though the gift does not carry the immense power of the Red Eye Dagger the gift is a magical stick"



The Secret Holder hands over the magic stick to Reimiko and as she inspects the magic stick the Secret Holder continues his story

"A wondering Shaman stumbled upon the stick at a camping site Yu-gin on the banks of the Khanuy river. Yu-gin is a sacred site for many warriors of the Beaver and Duck clans fought and died in battle. If one should go there one would see thousands of low grassy mounds of buried dead. While burying the dead, friends and family picked up all the weapons of war stewed on the battle grounds and burned the wooden handles and melted the metal parts into pots and pans. The story goes that a boy of the Beaver Clan fell in love with a young girl who was pledged to a high chief of the Duck Clan. She was a girl much like you a perfect oval face with almond eyes, long neck framed by dark falling hair upon straight shoulders.

The dishonor in the Duck Clan mixed with the unwillingness to return the bride from the Beaver Clan led to the great battle at Yu-gin. It is said the boy was a young but

Go Yen, Journeys

fierce fighter and the girl stood next to the boy and fought like a tigress. Both suffered mortal wounds and were carried from the battle field and buried together underneath the sole tree upon a hill.”

Reimiko became enchanted by the Secret Holder’s tale and asked “What magic does the gift hold?”

The Secret Holder replied “The Khan’s burial chamber contains more than a thousand relics. Some come with known stories and others have lost stories. In other words the stick does not come with an instructions manual. There is no explanation of its power, if any, no advise of safety warnings or words of cautions and no warranty plan. I don’t know what magical powers your magic stick will perform but I suspect if you and the magic stick become friends then its magic will be understood.”

Reimiko carries on a doctor’s life in Thousand Sleeping Shipwrecks Golden Castle. During slow times with no patients to look after Reimiko would go into her private quarters and take out the magic stick out of a sheath she sewed together of Korean brocaded golden silk material. So far she has mentally listed of peculiarities of the stick: eight silver buttons, one green button, eight flat blue buttons, and eight brass twelve petal flower buttons (seven around the circumference and one on the top end); the total length is five hand spans, while the handle portions is a little less than two hand spans; a leftover stump of a cutoff branch remains sticks out between the second and third silver buttons. Reimiko never wrote anything down on paper.

Go Yen, Journeys

Reimiko twirls and swirls the stick around through the air both silently and with the conjuring of various words used by circus magicians like “Abracadabra”. She tried rotating the swirling in both clockwise and counterclockwise directions. She swirled the stick a various number of times, once, twice, and even more than three times. She swirled the stick in count of the various combination of buttons, like eight twice, one, seven, and eight producing no magic. In fact she had the times she would swirl until her arm felt like falling off. While her curiosity drove her to do these actions she did often worry if she would release some evil spirit and harm. She would try other kinds of methods.

Instead of swirling Reimiko would do tapping in similar count patterns, first on the wood then stone and then on a water surface. She even tried tapping onto the hot ashen remains of a smoldering fire and even the top of her head. You had to give Reimiko a +A grade for using her imagination and perseverance.

She also tried rubbing the stick in one direction and then in reverse direction in all combination of ways. She, also, tried pressing down on the buttons in various sequences hoping the stick would reveal its magic. One would be reminded of the movie character Bubba counting the limitless descriptions of preparing and cooking shrimp to his new friend Forrest Grump in the movie “Forrest Grump”.

Then Reimiko hid the stick into her wooden cart on her annual gathering visit into the Shark Teeth Mountains. While gathering forest stuff having medicinal qualities, she kept an

Go Yen, Journeys

eye out for a flower with twelve petals similar to brass flower buttons. The seventh morning along the easterly bank of the Hebi River somewhere between the seventh pool and the Never Ending Snake Pit, she found a bed of such flowers pretty much identical shape of petals counting twelve. She placed seven flowers in a tight circle and stuck the stick bottom into the ground at the circle center. Then she places an eighth flower on top of the stick. And would you know the stick wobbled or one could say trembled but that was all that it did. Nothing else happened.

After more than a year of trying to conjure the magic from the stick Reimiko decided the only magic she desired was medicine to make her patients well. She stood the stick in the front office where patients waited and said the stick was just a souvenir stick from her long travels and nothing more. Children would pick it up and often imagine it to be a fighting sword swing it to and fro until the mother or father would take it away and place the stick back in the corner.

Sunrise on March 11, 2011, was a gentle warm gold and orange above the Shark Teeth Mountains. Reimiko woke up with her bent over body and rolled and stored away her bedding, futon, and pillow. Ah! Another day of life, a good life of family and wisdom. "Reimiko are you up?" her husband, the sake brewer, called out from her back bedroom.

"Yes, husband I am up and ready to cure the sick" as she laughed.

After all her first appointment was at 7:00 AM a seven year old girl with a cough.

“Well young lady how do you feel. How can such a pretty girl like you become ill? Your mother mentioned complaints of an achy body and frequent coughing. I have just a cure and a sweet candy for you. Make sure mother gives you two of these pills every six hours for the next seven days. Come back for a checkup. Take a lollipop because you are so well behaved young lady” instructed Reimiko.

A boat carpenter came in with a minor wound caused by a wood chisel Mizukoi entered the examination room and said hello to the patient who she had attended his birth. He was pleased to see a portrait of Mizukoi and said

“ I am so grateful to have such fine doctors to attend to my family illness throughout all these years” After this appointment Reimiko organized her doctor’s bag and left the office to make several home visits for patients either too old or too sick to make to trip to the doctor’s office.

Reimiko returned mid-afternoon and checked up with how mother in-law was doing. She found her sitting up in her rocking chair with an open book on her lap but sleeping. Reimiko saw the waiting patients in the reception area glued to the television screen watching the local news station.

On March 11, 2011 the newscaster was reporting on a great earthquake started at 2:45 P.M. lasting six minutes and a tsunami had occurred on the East coast of Japan. The report cited a great loss of lives and tremendous destruction including a nuclear power plant. An emergency alert flashed on the screen accompanied with a high pitch siren citing a tsunami warning for Thousand Sleeping Shipwrecks City.

Go Yen, Journeys

The announcer said “A tsunami is expected to wrap around the coastline of Japan and expected to arrive in approximately two hours”

“Husband! We must seek higher ground and get away from the shoreline” Reimiko said hurriedly

“There is no time to gather family heirlooms. Along the land of East Japan the ocean floor has sunk some thirty feet and a tsunami was created by an undersea earthquake offshore” explained Reimiko.

“Reimiko you go with my son because I am too slow moving” replied her mother in-law who in her old age had a hard time walking far.

“But my husband can carry you piggyback mom so don’t argue” shouted back Reimiko.

As Reimiko reached for Todoshi’s journal, sailors standing on their ships saw the water on the bay receding, leaving boats tied to the pier sitting on dry sea bed. Fishes and all types of sea creatures were seen lying on the dry sea bed. A few foolish people went to pick up the creatures that could be sold for money.

The first wave broke through the manmade berm and flooded the streets and narrow alleyways of the fish market and merchant districts. By the time Todoshi’s journal was placed next to her heart, the cold churning black waters enveloped the house and bodies were swept away into the ocean.

Lucky the black cat survived and, as the Lady in Waiting, floated above the rising waters with Todoshi’s journal and disappeared into the forest of the Shark Teeth Mountains

Go Yen, Journeys

and seeking shelter. The relic was given to old Kuma at the Cave to the Whistling Bear Clan. The katana of the Lady in Waiting could not defeat a twenty feet high tsunami to save the seventh and last female lineage of Princess Yūki.

At the age of ninety seven, Reimiko, her eldest son and the magic stick were washed into the receding tsunami of March 11, 2011.

Thus ends the female lineage of Princess Yūki but the stories continue until the circle of Go Yen is complete.

{Hawaii Five O}

The boy and I, Go Yen, in 1922 left Japan with golden dreams which lay in the far away islands of Hawaii.

Kazutaka is herded onto an interisland freight ship headed to the big island of Hawaii. Kazu for short is assigned to Japanese Camp Number 7 owned by the Puna Sugar Company.

Now days you can still drive by the Big Manager's house but the camp toward the little town of Pahoa is no longer there. One year later Kazu marries a Hawaiian local girl, thereby, giving up on the dream of ever returning to Thousand Sleeping Shipwreck Golden Castle. Another year later the son is born. The boy was named Shichi or seven in English for Camp 7. The son Shichi is the first American born into the Princess Yūki lineage which began some two hundred thirty years before.

When Kazu was a field worker in the sugar cane field he quickly noticed the hierarchy of workers and managers. The field workers were Chinese, Japanese, or Filipino. While the Lunas were either Portuguese or Scottish, and the Big Boss

Go Yen, Journeys

was always Caucasian. Workers of different race were housed separately in Chinese Camp, Japanese Camp, and Filipino Camp. Some workers who had previous learned skills from their native country worked in the sugar cane field until they had acquired enough money to start their own business in some town.

During the World War II, Kazu was in a crowd watching Army soldiers placing a machine gun nest in the top of a Buddhist temple and commented

“Why don’t they place that machine gun nest in the top of the Catholic church? Get more better view of the beach for killing the Japanese invaders when land in their landing crafts” During the war the American military infiltrated the local population with local observers whose job was to report on any un-American actions or conversations. It so happens that one these local observers in the crowd surrounding Kazu was a man whom Kazu had friendly conversations and felt like he could trust. Kazu was wrong.

A week later Kazu found himself sitting opposite a Caucasian man with a short military hair cut wearing a starched white dress shirt and plain black tie under a simple pressed gray suit. Overhead was a single source of glaring light bulb. In the darkness beyond the seated interviewer stood a twin of the interviewer who was obvious a F.B. I. agent. The interviewer asked Kazu the following questions: “

Are you a legal citizen of the United States of America? Kazu said yes since he married an American citizen; Are you loyal to the United States of America”

Kazu answered “yes”

‘

Go Yen, Journeys

“What was the purpose of the comment you made while watching the American soldiers place a machine gun nest in the bell tower of the Buddhist Temple?”

Kazu answered “I just spoke my thought and meant no disrespect. Hey if you go the Catholic church and stand in the top of the bell tower you will see it is a fact that it is a much better placement for the machine gun nest”

After the interview Kazu always kept his opinions to himself trusting no one even those who proclaimed to be his friend. He always had to turn around to check if anyone was trailing him to catch him in an unpatriotic act. This went on until his untimely death.

Kazu eventually leaves plantation work to become the janitor at Laupahoehoe Elementary School. The school was located near the shoreline at the mouth of the valley. On the morning of April 1, 1946 at 7:06 AM Kazu drowns while attempting to save seventeen students caught in the eight torrential tsunami waves that reached 31 feet in height crushing the wooden school buildings and tossing buildings 500 feet inland.

Kazu became the fourth member of the family to die in a tsunami. Later on his relatives living in Japan began to suspect there was some sort of family curse of a water related violent death. Kazu left behind his son Shichi who was raised by his Hawaiian mother. The author has four such deaths of male cousins on his mother side. That is why the only time he immerses with water is while taking a shower.

Go Yen, Journeys

In 1931 at age of seven Shichi was dared to walk on a seven inch diameter cast iron pipe crossing a drainage canal. He looked at his friends on the opposite side, Shichi stared down at the shallow water seven feet below and again turned away slowly, and went home weeping.

He heard others yelling out "Oh! Chicken shit you stay!" at his back.

Later that week, Shichi was challenged to climb up the rusted framework of an abandoned warehouse and do a balancing act on a steel beam. Shichi looked down at his feet kicking the dirt around again Shichi slowly walked away and then ran home crying.

From that day on Shichi was given the nickname Yowamushi which translates to "No guts" that stuck like glue into adulthood even though the origin of why was lost. The why was lost in time because Shichi or better known as Yowamushi had his share of fist fights behind the school gym or in the boy's locker room. He did not back down. Once he fought Leroy who said Shichi was a jerk for bumping into him during a volleyball or dodgeball match. A fight began in the boy's locker room. His older half brother happened to be watching the fight. Well, it was hard to determine a winner. But the fight ended after the class bell rung. The teacher noticed Yowamushi looked bruised so when Leroy entered the classroom she scolded Leroy for beating up a smaller opponent. Yowamushi sunk into his seat. The next day Leroy came to school with a broken hand

Go Yen, Journeys

wrapped in bandage. Lesson learned is no hit a hard head Japanese.

Entering the tenth grade Yowamushi tried out for the varsity football team but Coach determined Yowamushi was too small. One day the Coach asked Yowamushi to be the team water boy. No glory in that role!

Too small to play on the varsity football team Yowamushi played in the barefoot football league where players were supposed to weigh less than 135 pounds but teams cheated. The first day of practice he was given the football not to throw passes, or learn to secure the football as a running back but to learn how to hike the ball and then block. At the end of the first season he was pretty good snapping or long hike properly and was confident in blocking and as a defensive tackle how to evade a block, grab hold of a ball carrier, and take down the runner.

At the end of the first season Yowamushi gain a personal confidence to stand his ground and not be pushed around. So he followed his coach's choice of center position until, three years later, it was his last eligible year to play. The first day of practice when the coach said running backs to my right and all others to my left, Yowamushi walked over with the running backs thinking of the glory of being a great running back. The Coach walked over to Yowamushi and said "Here hike the ball." School work was not very interesting and a lot of times he doodled anything and everything from cartoon characters to caricatures of the gang members.

Go Yen, Journeys

During the high school years the winds of wars blew across the Euro-Asia continent as World War II engulfed the whole world. Yowamushi remembers his father's words spoken in 1943 "You are American. Never forget. Do not bring shame upon the family."

With Go Yen in his pocket he eventually follows other young Japanese men into military service in the Go for Broke battalion. While being at a training Army base in the South he was often confronted with the openness of racial prejudice seeing "white only" and colored only" signs. He was not familiar with such blatant public prejudice in Hawaii. His infantry battalion was shipped to the European theater. While those volunteers who spoke the Japanese language went to Military language schools and then served in the Military Intelligence Service, MIS in the Pacific theatre.



Go Yen, Journeys

CHAPTER 12 WHAT'S IN A NAME?

"My story began with Jerome leaving Hawaii for his home in Texas and a job working on a shrimp boat in Galveston off the Gulf of Mexico. Just like Forrest Grump! Jerome got off an old Greyhound and stood enveloped in the brown bus dust trail as a glaring white Texan Sun rose in the East. He shook off the dust settling on his white sleeveless tee shirt and pickup his old backpack."

{Galveston}

"It's been a long time" thought Jerome.

The ground had started to heat up and the morning condensation on the foot high brownish wild grass evaporated quickly disappearing into a thirsty Texas dry air.

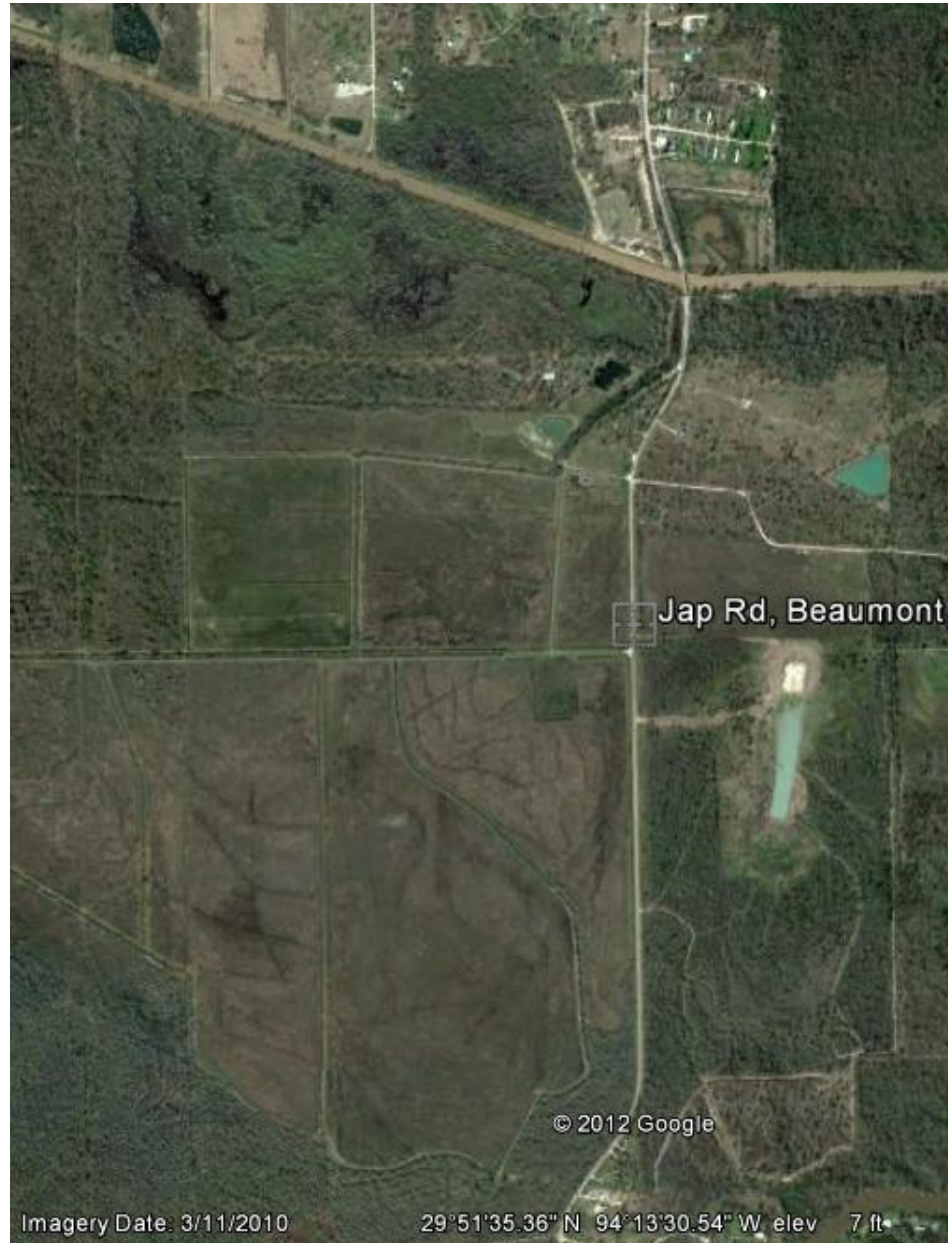
Go Yen, Journeys

Jerome walked across the brown cracking asphalt paved two lane road and squinted at the road sign pitted against the glaring Sun behind it and shook his head in wonder and disgust.

Decades later the name on that insignificant road sign would appear within a small news article. In areas populated by Japanese Americans throughout the country Japanese elders who either were interned in internment camps or served during World War two would exclaim “Baka!” “stupid!”. But what’s in a name especially on a nondescript side road in a small agricultural district under the wide open sky and spaces of Texas?

{American Pie}

The explanation offered by those Texans who lived on the road said the name was to honor the ethnicity of one of the original farmers. Honor? Did they learn the demeaning of the word in school or from their parents? They had the nerve to give such a reason! Jerome walked seven tenths of a mile in from the deserted dusty road and stood under the cooling shadow of a hundred year old Pecan tree. This was grandma’s home on Jap Road, Beaumont, Texas zip code 77705.



The following is an article of Jap road.

Texas Community in Grip of a Kind of Road Rage

By SIMON ROMERO

Published: July 16, 2004

“It is merely a four-mile stretch of asphalt on this East Texas city's outskirts, dotted with some ranch-style houses, a few decaying trailer homes and a shuttered gun shop, in the distance the rice fields that brought a small group of Japanese settlers here a century ago.

But the name of the country lane, Jap Road, has long angered many Japanese-Americans. Equally outraged are numerous people who live on Jap Road, which has 100 or so residences; they view criticism of their address as meddling in their affairs.

"I hear 'Jap' cars and 'Jap' bikes all the time," Buddy Derouen, 69, a retired petrochemical worker who lives on the road, in the community of Fannett, said in a recent letter published in The Beaumont Enterprise. "Why not Jap Road?"

The competing positions are set to clash in a meeting on Monday at the Jefferson County Courthouse. Leading the county commissioners' agenda is a discussion of whether they should change the name.

Advancing the issue this far has been a victory of sorts for Sandra Nakata Tanamachi, whose family settled in Beaumont after emigrating from Japan in the early 1900's. Before moving away to Lake Jackson, south of Houston, Ms. Tanamachi, an elementary-school teacher, lobbied more than a decade ago to have the road's name changed. She was unsuccessful.

Last December, however, she allied herself with Thomas Kuwahara, a helicopter pilot from Lafayette, La., who was

stunned to come across the road a few years ago while driving to San Antonio to visit a relative. They filed a complaint with two federal agencies -- the Department of Transportation and the Department of Housing and Urban Development -- trying to keep Jefferson County from getting federal money unless the road's name was changed.

"We Japanese are often ignored, but we're still individuals with feelings," Ms. Tanamachi said in an interview, speaking with a thick Texas twang. "I felt I could not stand in front of my students and talk about values like dignity and respect and not fight this thing."

Scott Newar, the lawyer representing Ms. Tanamachi and Mr. Kuwahara, said HUD had told them that it did not directly finance any housing programs in the county, a circumstance effectively limiting its actions. The Department of Transportation has asked Texas state authorities to examine the complaint, Mr. Newar said."

Go Yen, Journeys

In 2012 my search for Jap Road in Google Map found its location in Texas.

While in Hawaii Jerome had read about the 442 and 100 Battalion's rescue of the 144 regiment 36 Infantry Division from Texas in the Vosges forest in the northwestern part of France during World War II. The battle happened on a hill thereafter named "Banzai Hill" because of the banzai charge by the Go for Broke Japanese-American soldiers. The phrase "Go for Broke" means to ignore all the dangers and death only the goal has meaning." All in" a gambler would say.

Apparently the Texan farmers on this narrow dead end road never heard of the heroic rescue or believed it was just northern propaganda to insult proud Texans. Some still believe the Civil War was still on-going despite General Lee's surrender at Appomattox. Jerome's favorite uncle had been a member of the rescued lost Texas Division surrounded by Nazi soldiers in the Vosges forest.

He lay close to the ground beneath the flight of Nazi tracers and bullets. Both hands covered his ears because the noise was son of a bitch loud! It is documented that more than eight hundred casualties called Buddha heads and about two thousand Japanese American soldiers, slant eyes and yellow skin, were wounded during the Vosges campaign and about four hundred were killed during the rescue of 211 Texan soldiers.

Overhead the trees rained down deadly wooden splinters as German artillery shells exploded high above the soldiers. The left company moved to the German's left flank, hill 618,

Go Yen, Journeys

while the center and right companies were held down by constant German fire below the German high ground. After the first soldier was killed on hill 618 the company rose to their feet and charged. Then the other two companies charged up the hill suffering many casualties killing and getting killed shouting "Go for Broke"

"Eh! You see da guy pinned down there? You think one of us got to get him safe or what?" Without answering Yowamushi the kid who would not walk on a pipe crossing over the canal picked up his rifle and sprinted in a zig zag pattern through a maze of tracers and bullets toward the trapped tall Texan.

{Rescue Me}

Yowamushi yelled not once, not twice, but three times "Go for Broke" and almost made the seventy feet distance!

He fell into the mud and moss covered ground mortally

wounded the last Samurai soldier of the Princess Yūki's lineage in front of Jerome's uncle and struggled to reach for his dog tag chain. And there I, Go Yen, hung on the chain along with the two dog tags.



It was a short expression of a dying soldier "Take this good luck coin and honor it. Never spend it. Honor the coin and honor me." The last words whispered by that short soldier from Hawaii were "All in life is temporary, fleeting, and ..." His brain ceased before the last words.

Go Yen, Journeys

Kazu, his father, saw two soldiers walking toward the school building as he swept the old wooden floor with peeling green paint. He saw them speaking to a teacher who was leaving the campus and saw her pointing in his direction. As they approached Kazu they took off their army hats and walked briskly. "We regret to inform you that your son Shichi, or as he was known as Yowamushi in his platoon was killed in action during a campaign in France. The American government and the President offer their condolence and Yowamushi was awarded a purple heart for his actions in heavy battle with the Germans surrounding a lost Texas battalion." As he accepted the medal Kazu said "You know what, when you call my son Yowamushi you dishonor him. That name translated into English means "No Guts" If you done with you got to do you can turn around and go. Before I do something I will regret" Their faces turned white with surprise and they sprinted to their jeep. As he sat down on the stairs covering his face Kazu yelled "Baka (stupid)!. They did not describe how Shichi died while attempting a rescuing a Texan soldier pinned down.

Jerome's uncle returned to Texas and became a success at selling and buying stocks with a little help from a good luck old Japanese coin. On his death bed Uncle gave Jerome the very old Japanese coin. Uncle described the circumstances upon receiving the coin in France in 1944 and said

GO YEN

Go Yen, Journeys

“Honor the unknown Japanese man who saved my life and honor the coin. Find a way to return the coin to a Japanese family.”

Jerome made his plan to move to Hawaii and find that Japanese family.

In 2016 I read another news article that in 1952 the Senator from Texas, Tom Connally, while arguing against statehood for Territory of Hawaii said

“I think I am a better American than a great many people who live in Hawaii. I have been to Hawaii. The majority of the people there are not of American Ancestry or descent.”

Funny how some fellow Americans ignore the facts and easily forget the courageous deeds done by other Americans.

Eventually Jap Road was renamed to Boonduck Road.

BOOK TWO END



BOOK THREE

RED EYE DAGGER

Go Yen, Red Eye Dagger

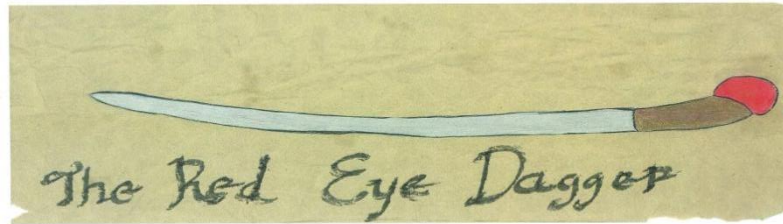
{You Got A Friend}



Chapter 1 “Friend”

During conquest of Persia, west of India, one cold and dark blue sky night lit by a bluish moon before a deciding battle, he slept with one eye open. A bluish beam of silent moonlight slipped through the tent's smoke vent penetrating into a floating red sapphire and shined red against the black shadows in Genghis, the Khan of Khans' Ger (Mongolian for tent). Turns out the glimmering red sparkle was warning Genghis and the sign of danger was from a red oval sapphire on the end of an assassin's dagger. In a split second the great Genghis used his bare left arm blocking the assassin's downward swift motion of the Red Eye Dagger and turned the killing tip into the assassin's tightened jugular vein. What a mess! The assassin's blood spurted in a gush of iron red and splattered on his bed robe and insect silk netting. The Khan shoved the lifeless body off onto the dirt floor and Tibetan and Persian carpets, picked up the Red Eye Dagger, and called it friend.

Go Yen, Red Eye Dagger



Drawn by Olivia Ross



Olivia Ross

In the hands of Genghis Khan, the Red Eye Dagger was used to point at the ever expanding borders of the Mongolian Kingdom to the Kings and Queens who knelt before the Khan. His Emissary would shout out in the Khan's court "Behold the expanse of the Mongolian Empire, the Khan's conquest that now includes your lands bounded by seas East and West and mountains to the North and jungle to the South."

Go Yen, Red Eye Dagger

"Object and you and your line will end by the fire and fury of his might army" Necks bent and heads bowed in defeat while palms sweat and twinges of fear flowed in trembling bodies.

Thus began the legend throughout Asia the Red Eye Dagger carried the magical source of giving its owner the power of conquering kingdoms and acquiring treasure of glittering gold and gems. The Red Eye Dagger was even sought after, some seven hundred years later, for this magical power by greatest the twentieth century evil Adolph Hitler and thank god he did not find it, otherwise, you and I would be writing this story using the German language. After Genghis died from the plague while invading Eastern Europe, his body was returned to Mongolia and secretly the Red Eye Dagger was buried in the hidden grave, enclosed right hand of Genghis Khan in Mōkokoku, country of the Mongols. The hand that conquered half of the known world held in his tight grasp a friend.

Everyone who knows knows that his tomb and riches were never uncovered in Mongolia but not so. In each generation since the Khan's death there is one who possesses the knowledge and passes the location to the next generation a singular select secret holder.

Chapter 2 “Chamberlain’s Ancestor”



In 1244 an ancestor of the Evil Chamberlain grew up the lone son of a postal worker living in Haunted Blood Town drawing and painting landscapes. His father would ask him “Okay if and when you become an artist how will you make money to pay for food and rent?” But even this fatherly advice did not deter him. Plus he was never encouraged by his art teachers but he did not value the fake opinions of others especially what he considered the old and obsolete elite establishment. Any opinion that would diminish his artistic ability was filed as fake and not worthy to file in his brain.

He would say to anyone that “No matter what they say my art work is the best in the school and even in the whole stinking town”.

{I Can’t Get No Satisfaction}

An Art teacher was once overheard to say “You cannot send a silly, sully orange Orangutan to Tiger school”.

Go Yen, Red Eye Dagger

Fake Opinions! The ancestor secretly began to modify the paint and black ink of other students ever so slightly so no one could really distinguish the change but the completed picture of other students were never as bright and alive as they should have been. But even with his undiscovered cheating the sad, bad boy whose lineage would bear the Evil Chamberlain of the Castle of the Lake never gained the high praise he thought he deserved.

“The master is a dotard and all his teachers just don’t get it. They must either be blind mice or ignorant rats who only praise their favorites and not me!” whispers to himself.

Truth always paints the visible clarity of thought. This being said his paintings displayed a blurred sense of evil and cruelty. And evil is never beautiful. Not wanting to become a postal worker like his father at the age of seven plus ten he left Japan.

{The Wanderer}

He stowed away behind brown ceramic jars holding rice grains in the dark lightless hold of a Thousand Shipwreck pirate ship which was one of many that raided the Chinese trading shippers. Thus the Lord of Thousand Sleeping Shipwrecks Golden Castle gathers the exotic spices of India and Sumatra and bright jewels of the darker skinned countries beyond India.

“Hey Captain look at what I found behind the rice jars in the freaking freight hole? A scrawny little bony weakling!” yelled from the dark hole to the Captain standing on the deck looking down.

Go Yen, Red Eye Dagger

"I would throw the bag of skinny bones overboard and feed the swarming sharks but I think the sharks would just take one sniff and throw him back on deck." commented the first mate.

"Hey haul him out and let me see the stowaway." shouted the Captain as he thought what a waste of precious food this would be.

"Well boy explain yourself and why I should waste a single grain of rice or grain of salt and allow you another day of life upon my pirate ship?" asked the Captain.

"I don't remember how I got here. I must have been drugged and brought onboard by some unknown sailor or sea god to have me benefit you because I can understand the Chinese spoken and written language. I can perhaps translate the secrets of the Chinese ship logs to reveal the shipping routes on the China Seas between Korean and Chinese ports to Philippine Islands." whispered the smart-alec boy so others could not hear

"The information I could give you would increase your captured treasures, at least seven-fold, and maybe ten-fold."

And so the boy would stay on board for a year or two until he convinced the Captain he could gather more valuable intelligence by spying in a major Chinese seaport. After being granted a small boat to row ashore the boy did not return. Having gain more than the weight of seven hundred very fat boys of treasure and spices the Captain did not send a search party to retrieve the mischievous youngster.

Go Yen, Red Eye Dagger

He yelled to the first mate “Hoist the sail and the anchor before we lose the outgoing tide for we are heading home”. As a teenager and young man the ancestor spent the next thirty years roaming the Kingdom of China. He learned to become more evil as years of artistic frustration were piled layer upon layer and his self-confidence became less and less. But evil has a way of overpowering a person's false self-confidence and by evil ways the man came into possession of the Red Eye Dagger which became a family heirloom.

About the year 1276, the secret holder was tricked into revealing the location of the Great Genghis Khan's grave. The evil and melancholy man used dark magic and fooled the secret holder by promising eternal life. The evil man said “I hold the magical power to give you eternal life.”

To demonstrate this power he shows the live bird and kills a small finch in his tightening death grip of his left hand. He showed the limp neck finch dangling upside down from his death grip. He opens the dead bird beaks and drops a drop of proclaimed magic potion into it's mouth. Then cups his hands together and by a slight of hand trick switches the dead finch with a live identical finch.

“How will I know I will have eternal life once you cast the magic spell? .You will be long gone after you get hold of the Red Eye Dagger and then I will die of sickness or old age.” asked the secret holder.

The evil chamberlain ancestor shrewdly said “You are so correct and smart, my friend, so before I leave I can give you couple of tests like I have done multiple many times before.

Go Yen, Red Eye Dagger

First you and I and this white rabbit will drink a poison drink, the rabbit will die but both of us will survive. Then I will stab my chest with my dagger and you will observe I won't die. Then I will stab the dagger into your chest and then you will also survive."

The secret holder and the ancestor stood above the burial chamber of Genghis Khan. The secret holder did not divulge the pattern of seven smooth stones was the burial site marker just in case the ancestor would come back in the future for unclaimed riches. The ancestor held a magic red gem onto the forehead of the secret holder and sprinkled drops of eternal life fluid on the secret holder's head, then whispered a supposedly god blessing while pressing his right hand on the secret holder's chest. After the ceremony the ancestor mixed yellow and red potions that gave off a bad green vapor but was perfectly harmless. He poured the mixture into small dish in the rabbit cage and used a single wooden chopstick to stir. He had previously stained the same chopstick with a deadly poison. What is another rabbit compared to what power I need. The rabbit slid down and died the head making a small splash as it slid into the poisoned bowl. .

At first hesitant the secret holder was focused on if the ancestor would stop breathing after sipping the potion. After seeing the ancestor was still alive the secret holder pinched his nose and took a sip of the fake poison potion.

"Hey I don't feel like I am dying. I must confess that I was scared, really, really scared." confessed the secret holder.

Go Yen, Red Eye Dagger

Next the ancestor held his trick dagger. As he stabbed himself he pressed upon a small undetectable release trigger on the handle. The blade of the dagger would sink back into the handle but still appear to plunge into the chest. The tip of the dagger left a small nick so a visible bloody nick could be seen when the total blade length would reappear.

“See I am still alive and only bled a small amount of blood enough to satisfy the thirsty gods of life and death. But otherwise I am good to go! Now it is your turn” instructed the ancestor.

Feeling a lot more confident of the eternal life blessing the secret holder gained more confidence in the ancestor’s black magic,

“Okay I am ready for the dagger test.” said the secret holder.

This time the ancestor did not put pressure on the blade release trigger. The next scene can only be rated as PG “parental guidance” or R for “restrictive” the secret holder’s iron smelling red blood shot out like water from a gushing green garden hose as the ancestor smiled.

“A fool is born every minute” whispered the ancestor into the dead man’s left ear, the ear from which the dead listens to the words of the living.

The ancestor dug seven feet into the ground of dark brown earth and hit pay dirt!

The Chamberlain’s evil ancestor pulled the Red Eye Dagger from the clenched right hand of Genghis Khan, prying each bony finger until the Khan’s bony grip released the Red Eye Dagger. All the other treasures were left

Go Yen, Red Eye Dagger

behind, more riches beyond the dreams of any King but the thirst of power consumed the dark soul of an evil man.

During his rule (1260-1294) Kublai Khan, the grandson of Genghis Khan, sailed two armadas against the Golden Islands of Japan only to be destroyed against the western rocky edges of the Thousand Sleeping Shipwreck Golden Castle. The Khan's purpose of invasion was formed under the sole pretense of gaining golden riches for his generals and admirals but the true sole secret purpose was to retrieve the Red Eye Dagger.

So only the grandson of Genghis Khan and the Evil Chamberlain's ancestors understood the true reason for amassing a navy of a thousand ships and hundreds of thousand warriors not once but twice, and wisely not three times.



Go Yen, Red Eye Dagger

{Redemption Song}

Chapter 3 “Journey to Redemption”

The story of the Red Eye Dagger is a story of redemption. The blade went from the hand of a Persian hired assassin to Genghis Khan through the ancestors of the evil chamberlain to the Evil Chamberlain to Yobushi the Fist to Yu' uga na to Harue to Doctor to Mizukoi to Reimiko then back to Genghis Khan.

The Evil Chamberlain used the Red Eye Dagger cutting out the pulsating heart of the Lady in Waiting at the Red Water Inn. Then years later the Evil Chamberlain was killed by a ninja while gambling with Yobushi the Fist at the Red Water Inn. Then a teenager Yu' uga na was given the Red Eye dagger and trained to use the dagger by Yobushi, the fist, to protect herself and the old couple against pirates and thieves. Then years later the Red Eye Dagger was found by

Go Yen, Red Eye Dagger

Harue, through an indirect way by Grandmother, and Harue in gratitude for medicinal knowledge and the wooden medicine box gave the Red Eye Dagger to Doctor who had admired the sharp edge of the strong but thin blade. After Doctor's return to Thousand Sleeping Shipwrecks Golden Castle Doctor used the blade during surgery doing what surgeons do saving lives. Then Harue learns surgery and once again becomes the dagger's owner and when Mizukoi returns from America she handles the Red Eye Dagger to save lives. And, finally, Reimiko returns the Red Eye Dagger back to Genghis Khan.

"We all are more than we appear to be" Grandmother's last words are true even for the Red Eye Dagger.



Go Yen, Red Eye Dagger

Chapter 4 “At Honolulu Academy of Arts”

A while back I, Yukio, visited an exhibition “Lethal Beauty Samurai Weapons and Amor” based on a book of the same name by Andreas Marks at the Honolulu Academy of Arts. I saw a kawari kabuto (fancy samurai helmet) made of iron, lacquer, and silk fashioned to be a black bear head. It was made in the Monoyama period (1392 to 1573) the middle sixteenth century.

I thought of my story and Kuma, the alpha male bear. As I walked further into the room I came upon an enormous six panel silk screen painted by an anonymous Kano-School artist in the mid seventeenth century. Though the total size was an enormous five feet high and twelve feet wide what caught my attention was a small scene no more than a couple of square inches on the fourth panel.

The screens depicted the series of Battle of Yashima of the Genpai Wars (1180-1185). What was truly remarkable, a lone woman of apparent high noble birth stood at the bow of

Go Yen, Red Eye Dagger

a boat while a Samurai on horseback rode his tan horse with white mane ever closer to the boat. I read the caption notes in the exhibition book describing the noble woman belonged to the Taira Clan who challenged a Minamoto Clan Samurai to cut or shoot down a flag she had flown high upon the bow.

Nasu no Yoichi, a Minamoto warrior, drew back the arrow while on horseback. I later read he had shot down the flag pictured floating in the surf but my question is what happened to the apparent second arrow now aimed in the boat's direction. I envision beads of sweat and salt water flowing from his brow. Nasu no Yoichi squinted his left eye as the sting of sea water mist blinked the right eye, holding a final breath before launching the arrow straight and true into noble lady's neck. I was more astounded that the publisher and author had selected this single depiction of the enormous silk panels as the cover of the exhibit book as follows.

Go Yen, Red Eye Dagger



I saw the next uncaptured scene as a video the Lady slumping to the deck as the bow of the boat slammed into the next wave and white foam. The tan horse with white mane reared up high as Nasu no Yoichi held high the bow with a steady left arm. Amongst the cries of battle and the cheers of the Minamoto warriors was the silence of the Taira boat's oarsmen who rushed to the lying lady dying.

It became clear in my mind there was no doubt she was an ancestor of Princess Yūki so very clear for Yūki translates

GO YEN

Go Yen, Red Eye Dagger

to courage. I did not reveal this meaning before. I don't know why it just happened. It is what it is.

BOOK THREE END

BOOK FOUR

SEVEN BRIDGES

{Seven Bridges Road}

Introduction

Book Four will introduce two new characters to complete the lineage of seven strong women in the lineage of Princess Yūki. This book will describe the short life of Lady Red Camellia, the Matriarch of the line, and Lady Red Ruby her daughter and Yūki's mother.

These lives preceded the Lady in Waiting's loyalty oath of protecting the women of the Castle of the Lake lineage forever, probably why their lives were cut short.

GO YEN

Go Yen, Seven Bridges



Bridge One “Shark Bridge” and Lady Red Camellia



Go Yen, Seven Bridges

The Lord of a fiefdom on the Southwest shore of the lake went through an arranged marriage with the Lord of Thousand Sleeping Shipwreck Golden Castle forming an alliance with a sea power and a Northern land force consisting of foot soldiers and horseback warriors. The alliance created a pincher strategy placing the Tanaka fiefdom along the North shore of the Lake in jeopardy. The marriage cemented the forces of the Bear clan, the symbol of the southwest Castle of the Lake, and the Shark clan, the symbol of the Thousand Sleeping Shipwreck Golden Castle.

An elder councilor urging the alliance said” My Lord, in order to, elevate our presence on the Lake and prevent any invasion by Lord Tanaka, whose clan symbol is the wily Fox, you have no greater importance than bestowing marriage to the Lady Red Camellia.”

The historical scrolls of the Bear Clan would say the Lady Red Camellia would produce the next heir a baby boy and both died at childbirth. The Lord of the Southwest Castle of the Lake suspected a Tanaka spy within the Lady’s inner sanctum poisoned the Lord’s Consort the Lady Red Camellia intent on killing both mother and newborn. The poison failed to kill the new born.

The poison was administered while the pregnant Lady Red Camellia frequented a certain food vendor at the Bridge One during the absence of any royal food tasters.

{Tragedy}

“My Lady don’t you think it is about time you had some of those yummy crunchy rice crackers? You must allow the

Go Yen, Seven Bridges

royal baby you carry a tiny taste of some sumptuous elegant exquisite treats” whispered the Tanaka spy.

“Let’s go tomorrow without telling anyone, that would make your outing less enjoyable. We should go alone without any food tasters who would only delay quenching your taste of sweet and salty rice crackers or those roasted moichi (formed by pounding rice) on sticks. “

When news of the Lady Red Camellia’s murder and the strong suspicion of a Tanaka Clan conspiracy were posted at public squares, the same Lady in Waiting spy was quoted as saying “Listen that is just fake news! Does the news name the sources of who are expounding conspiracy! No, it is just fake news!” Scattered amongst the crowd were admirers of the Lady Red Ruby and the Lord who reported the vile words spoken.

The Lady spy was eventually exposed and met a quiet but cruel death in a dark street in Haunted Blood Town and her flesh was fed to rats in the sewer. Her last words were “I am only a pawn and not responsible for my lady’s death.” She refused acknowledging her treason to the end. But she did not know her fate was to satisfy the hunger of fat rats. The food vendor who delivered the poisonous rice crackers was tossed alive into the circling school of sharks. When nearby residents of Bridge One woke up, they saw the body of the Vendor hanging by a rope high enough over the water surface so his upper body was out of reach of the sharks but low enough so the lower half was chumped away by the circling sharks. One can say he did not enjoy each bite unlike his customers biting into his treats. Was this going to

Go Yen, Seven Bridges

the extreme extent of Justice? These acts were executed with discretion by the Ninja hired not by the government officials of the Castle of the Lake but bought by the Council of The Thousand Sleeping Shipwrecks Golden Castle who despised the evil Tanaka clan.

In the war later recalled as “The Bear and Shark stomped and ate a fox War” the Bear Clan Lord Teru Teru Bozu’s uncle completed the revenge of Lady Red Camellia murder by erasing any trace of the once Northern Castle and the Tanaka Clan inhabitants. They were not allowed to die as Samurai but the Tanaka Clan starved to death while hanging in cages while thorns of the vines dug into the prisoner’s flesh and black crows pecked out their eyes while their caged bodies were still alive.

The dead Lord of the Tanaka clan body and those who confessed in the participation of the Red Camellia’s assassination were sent to the Thousand Sleeping Shipwrecks Golden Castle where upon the leftover pieces of bodies were thrown over the sea cliff and fed to the swarming sharks churning the sea below. Some of the smaller pieces of flesh were picked and swallowed in mid-air by swooping sea gulls. So much for the idea of “dust to dust, ashes to ashes” was not allowed The Lord of the Thousand Sleeping Shipwrecks Golden Castle tossed the dead lord’s eyeless skinned skull over the cliff and silently said to himself “Justice is done”

Then the Lord of Thousand Sleeping Shipwrecks Golden Castle yelled “Damn you! Even this is too good a death for

GO YEN

Go Yen, Seven Bridges

murdering my daughter and attempting to kill the next heir to the Lord of the Castle of the Lake! Damn you to hell!”

The bridge had been renamed to “Shark Bridge” commemorating the wedding between the Shark and Bear Clans and The Lady Red Camellia.

Lady Red Camellia was born in 1630 at Thousand Sleeping Shipwrecks Golden Castle and died from poison in 1647 after giving birth. Hence after the Lord of the Castle of the Lake’s death those who had a say named the Lord’s son as the new Lord of Castle of the Lake.

The new Lord’s name was Teru Teru Bozu.

GO YEN

Go Yen, Seven Bridges



Bridge Two “Snake Bridge” and Lady Red Ruby



The new and single Lord of the Castle of the Lake, Teru Teru Bozu, wished to continue the alliance with the Shark

Go Yen, Seven Bridges

Clan and heard the claim that the Lady Red Camellia had a niece who had the same perfect oval face with almond eyes, long neck framed by dark falling hair upon straight shoulders whose genes would carry over for generations to come.

{Ruby Don't Take Your Love To Town}

The niece was given the name Lady Red Ruby because the red flame of fire can either provide warmth or destroy the enemy. Intrigued by these claims of her beauty and brave heart, the new lord of Castle of the Lake traveled North by a ship provided the Lord of Thousand Sleeping Shipwrecks Golden Castle. There was an impressive royal parade a march of seven hundred foot samurai, followed by samurai and Monk warriors on horseback, and carts of gifts. What he found was a brave heart to match his own and a face beyond belief. Sometimes love can make a perfect face more perfect. Love is blind but a master painter of beauty.. Hence they wed and went back to the Castle of the Lake cementing the union of Bear and Shark once again.

At the wish of Lady Red Ruby the marriage ceremony was not held in the Inner Sanctum of the Castle attended by only the high court. The Lady Red Ruby stipulated.

"My high Lord it is my hope our wedding ceremony will be held at Bridge Two and the public will have an open wedding invitation. Such a display will not only cement the Bear and Shark Clans but also tie the loyalty knot of all the people in both clans. In times of disaster and war the simple openness to all will become the highest treasure to be spent at the Lords' discretion."

Go Yen, Seven Bridges

“Not only do you have the heart of a warrior, beauty beyond belief, you have inherited the wisdom of all your ancestors.” replied Lord Teru Teru Bozu.

And true to her words a great number of commoners, merchants, and samurai travelled from the Thousand Shipwrecks Sleeping Golden castle to witness the wedding at Bridge Two. The Lady Red Ruby would give birth to Princess Yūki but the Consort would only live one year beyond the birth of Princess Yūki.

Lady Red Ruby became an active participant with Lord Teru Teru Bozu in defending their fiefdom against a Gang of Eight. They carried the following clan symbols: The Rat, The Moth, The Fox, The Devil; The Wild Boar, The Pray, Mantis, The Bat, and The Wild Dog.

Go Yen, Seven Bridges



The eight combined their forces into what was named the Spider Alliance because a spider has eight legs. These eight small fiefdoms were located on the Northerly shore of the Lake of Love Blood on western the foothills of Shark Teeth Mountains.

Go Yen, Seven Bridges

Though in “The Bear and Shark stomped and ate a fox War”, the Tanaka ruling class were wiped off the face of the earth the seven remaining small clans named another clan leader from their council. Hence the eight clans formed the eight legged Spider Alliance to expand their control to the southern land of Lake of Love Blood. After death of the Tanaka clan, Alliance members gathered secret cult members from the criminal segment of town’s people, hence the number eight

“We are strong! No one can defeat our alliance!” shouted the Lord of the Devil Clan.

“We were weak and easy to break when we looked after only our clan’s interest but now we are an alliance of eight and deadly as many deadly stingers we are able to kill a big fat lazy bumbling Bear. We will all have a free access through the seven bridges river to the Pacific Ocean and then all can expand their market to the Western Empire and Southeast Asia countries. Think of not having to pay tariffs or tolls to the freaking fat bear! Your pockets will be overflowing with gold and power in your hands will be enormous, Incomprehensible power”.

The Lord of the Bat clan said “Your words are wise and worldly so I propose you become the Head of the Spider”

The seven lords bowed in agreement and then bowed again but lower to the Lord of the Devil clan. Hence the Devil Clan head became head of the Spider Alliance. From that day on all the clans confiscated whatever iron utensils from the commoners to forged new swords, spears, and arrowheads. In the night carpenters and boatmen built

Go Yen, Seven Bridges

warships big enough to carry warriors and supplies. They secretly sent diplomats overseas to the Western empire seeking loans to fund their war against the Bear Clan. The alliance council began to send out spreaders whose job was to generate lies and rumors generating unrest among the citizens of the Shark clan and Bear clan.

The Devil Clan sent monthly payments to the Ninja Clan so they would gather military information of the Shark and Bear clans and create division of the alliance. The Ninja Clan ,also, sent spies North to the Shark clan spreading lies that the Bear clan were about to wage war against them and they sent spies South spreading rumors that the Shark clan was quietly building an invading force to surround and conquer the Bear clan.

Loyal commoners of both the Shark and Bear clans met with clan officials who passed on the spreading of lies to the next level and next until the danger was revealed to the Lord's council. Secret messengers were sent back and forth between the Shark and Bear clans. These secret messengers were monks from the Monastery overlooking the Lake of Love Blood. Under the Master Monk their loyalty and silence was never doubted.

The Master Monk, also, pledged the small but fierce force of warrior monks to fight the Spider Alliance.

"Master Monk the fierceness of your warrior monks is well known through the history of Lake of Love Blood. I pledge to use your monk's lives so theirs will not be wasted. Their fighting skills outweigh the number of enemies" whispered the Lord of Lake of Love Blood.

Go Yen, Seven Bridges

And so before the Spider Alliance could become more poisonous the Bear and Shark clans along with the warrior monks marched and sailed into the Spider's web.

{What's Going On}

It was while the navy of the Castle of the Lake attacked the eight legged enemy on ships provided by the Lord of Thousand Sleeping Shipwreck Golden Castle that Lady Red Ruby standing bravely at the prow of the lead ship shouted

"I dare anyone of you fools to shoot down the Bear and Shark flag flying on my ship!"

One Samurai dug his heels into the side of his war horse and plunged into wave after wave until he could fling an arrow upon Lady Red Ruby's flag. This was no easy feat of archery skill since both horse and ship rocked and rolled in the thundering lake. The first arrow split the flag pole and the flag floated and sank into the white foam and dark blue seawater. As Lady Red Ruby stared in astonishment at the floating Bear and Shark Clan battle banner the horseback Samurai shouted

"Do you doubt the archery skill of the Spider Samurai?"

The samurai then unclenched another arrow held between his teeth and loaded his bow and pulled the bowstring back with tension, and released the arrow reaching the slender long neck framed by dark falling hair on straight shoulders. Lady Red Ruby could not mutter a single syllable as red blood thinned pink with lake water flowed on the deck then back into the churning angry water. One moment she stood erect against the ship's rail then her knees buckled and her body slumped to the deck now

Go Yen, Seven Bridges

becoming cold as wave after wave washed over her still silhouette.

The reddish wash was mixed into the dark blue lake. No one held back tears or shouts of anger amongst the attacking ships. It took seven attacking Shark Clan ships to surround that mounted Spider Samurai and crush both man and horse to a watery death and grave.

Shark Samurai flew flaming arrows toward the Spider enemy on shore while other Samurai got off the ships and waded against the Spider Samurai defending the shoreline and small harbor.

During the lake battle Lord Teru Teru Bozu led his land forces on foot and horseback around the Southeast shore of the Lake and learned of Lady Red Ruby's death from a grieving monk messenger.

"My Lord your Consort Lady Red Ruby bravely died of an arrow while challenging the Spider forces. Be assured her death was avenged."

The warrior monks took the lead into the Spider's web and fought their way to the opposition's center. Once the center of the web was destroyed the remaining cobweb fell and dead bodies lay in their stinking spider nest oozing pink guts and red blood. The Spider boats had no chance of escape. Not even a Spider oar remained floating on the Lake of Love Blood.

"I saw the Shark clan fleet sink and burn the Spider Alliance navy while losing only one of their own" reported a Captain of a Bear clan boat.

Go Yen, Seven Bridges

The Bear and Shark clans' samurai marched head on into the Shark Teeth Mountain forest and routed the ninja fighters who jumped from tree branch to tree branch like monkeys. After all, the ninja were fighting for only money and the Bear clan and Shark clan warriors were fighting for their very existence.

After Lady Red Ruby's death, Lord Teru Teru Bozu took to taking unescorted journeys in disguise wondering how love can be lost, perhaps blaming himself. Occasionally he returned to the castle and conducted the Lord's business with fair judgement and compassion. In his absence the Evil Chamberlain practiced evilness to gain power over subjects.

Lord Teru Teru Bozu's Consort Lady Red Ruby was born 1647 at Thousand Sleeping Shipwrecks Golden Castle and died in the Lake Battle known as "the Bear and Shark stomps the Spider".

During her short lifetime Lady Red Ruby displayed the strength and flexibility of a powerful snake for she had fearlessness during battle and flexibility while governing her subjects with compassion unlike any other.

On the anniversary of her untimely death, Bridge Two was renamed The Snake Bridge in her honor. The bridge and two bridge approaches were colored red over the existing yellow and stones were laid in the form of a snake head at one end with red ruby eyes.

I guess for the reader's benefit, it is a good point in this story that Lady Red Camellia and Lady Red Ruby's deaths preceded the Princess Yūki's Lady in Waiting execution and

GO YEN

Go Yen, Seven Bridges

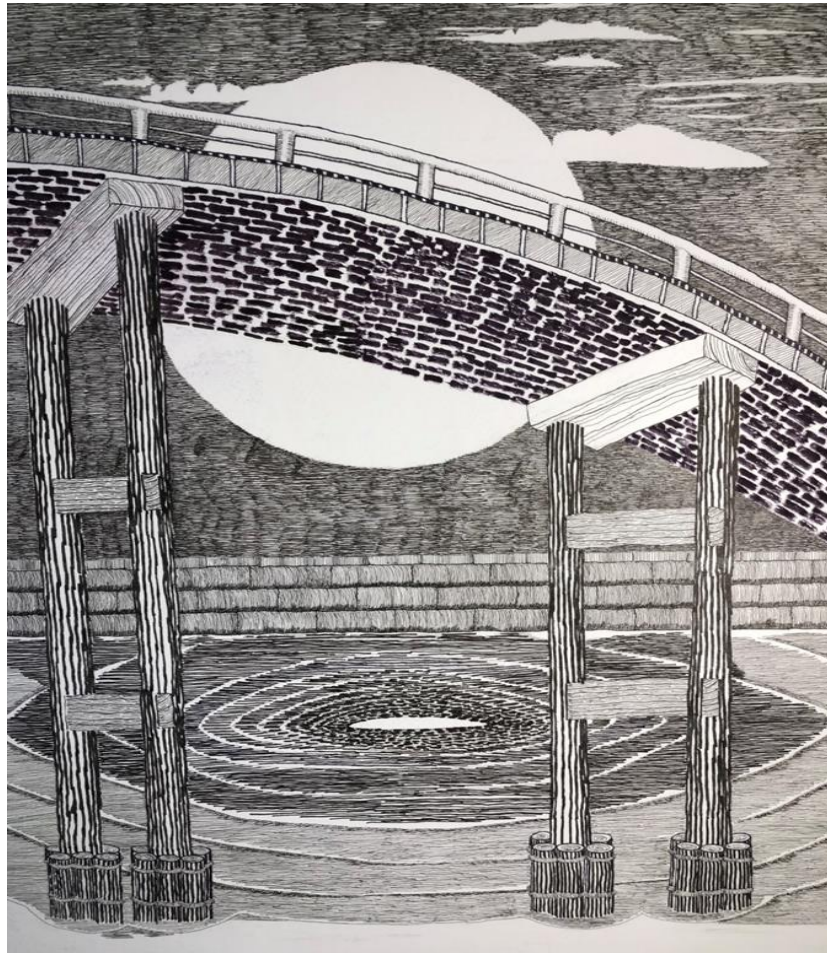
her promise to forever protect the women of Princess Yūki's lineage.

GO YEN

Go Yen, Seven Bridges



Bridge Three “Ghost Bridge” and Yu’uga na



{Spooky}

Go Yen, Seven Bridges

The Daughter of Princess Yūki, Yu'uga na, considered the fourth woman in the lineage, went on a holiday trip with the elderly couple at the request of Yobushi. Often on that trip Yu'uga na and the circus owner's daughter explored their surroundings, curious of the circumstances of others in Haunted Blood Town and attempting to find out a great secret the origin of the town's name.

Everyone they encountered and asked was too afraid to provide answers because of their local superstition.

"Oh sir can you please tell us country girls where the name of Haunted Blood Town came from?" Don't ask such a foolish question was the immediate and common reply.

Superstition said those who spoke of how Haunted Blood Town got the name would die on Bridge number Three the so called Ghost Bridge. The municipal ledgers recorded the list of names that died of stroke, heart attack, murdered in crimes of passion and criminal activities, missing and presumed drowned, and suicide. Though the list was only started seven years ago it was a very, very, very, very long list.

So it was on a hot humid day Yu'uga na and the circus owner's daughter sat on the river bank looking at by-passers, evaluating each, and taking turns asking the question

"Would you tell me why the town is named Haunted Blood town?"

GO YEN

Go Yen, Seven Bridges

Both girls giggled together as they spied upon an old hunched back skeletal woman leaning on her bent bamboo walking cane. Yu'uga na said

"It is your turn to ask the question. No shame and don't be afraid even though that old lady looks scary. It is only a superstition probably based on some silly story a mother told her children so they would not hang out at the bridge like what we are doing."

The Circus owner's daughter reluctantly asked the lonely old woman who stopped dead in her tracks and said

"Since I don't believe the old superstition, young girl, the origin of the town's name comes from the stories told by the lake boatmen saying in the yellow harvest moonlight the fishermen on the calm lake waters often see the image of the wife of a rich rice merchant, the murdered mother, and her boy and girl some nights floating upon the still surface. Blood gushes out her neck while damp ropes hang from the necks of the children. And their eyes stare out with black holes. After finding out a high inner circle counselor and his wife had an affair the rice merchant murdered his family and committed suicide by hanging by the neck at the highest point of the arched Ghost Bridge. His lifeless corpse swayed in the wind seventeen feet above the water while the beam anchoring the dead weight creaked with each pendulum motion. Now days on a still and windless night if you hear wood creaking but you better not look under the bridge. Better you run

Go Yen, Seven Bridges

The old lady picked up her walking pace to a slow run when she turned and saw the circus owner's daughter giggling with another girl who had a perfect oval face with almond eyes and a long neck framed by dark falling hair upon straight shoulders.

The next morning, the Circus owner's daughter did not wake up Yu'uga na. All over the Red Water Inn guests and employees were acting crazy in a commotion. Running room to room, bending over checking the spaces between the lowest storage shelves and floor, and turning boxes and bundles every which way.

After finding out her friend was missing Yu'uga na went searching for her friend and while walking through town she overheard whispers of fear and sadness. When she came upon the river banks at the Ghost Bridge she saw two rice mats one with a bent bamboo cane laying at its side and the other was a shorter rice mat.

Two passing vegetable vendors' conversation went like "We know why the Circus owner strangled and tossed the old woman over the bridge. But why did the old woman whack the girl's head and toss the young Circus owner's daughter into the river?"

The other vendor replied "Madness, madness, just crazy madness!"

The Circus owner was sentenced to thirty years of hard labor in the rock quarry where huge blocks of granite rock were mined for castle walls and died one hot and dry day of heat stroke. Since you now know the origin of the town's

Go Yen, Seven Bridges

name you must never travel to Japan and cross the Ghost Bridge. Or I could never forgive myself.

After the passing of seven full moons and wandering in the murky red waters of Lake of Love Blood, the circus owner's daughter's angry spirit became possessed with the idea that she was tricked by Yu' uga na pushing her to ask the old lady the forbidden question "Why is the town named Haunted Blood Town?" She knew what would happen to me! And I think it was really her turn to ask the question not mine. And dammit I fell for her trick! Now, who is stuck here to wander in Lake of Love Blood for eternity? My life was cut short I won't experience the love of a man nor the happiness of becoming a mother. The circus owner's daughter becomes an Yūrei (an evil ghost spirit capable of possessing a living person's body seeking revenge for a wrongdoing) to seek revenge against Yu' uga na and her bloodline.

So the Yūrei sits on the Ghost Bridge intently listening to the rumors and gossip of passers-by, hoping to learn any news of Yu uga na. The Yūrei jumped into the body of a merchant of pottery and journeyed into the tea houses of Haunted Blood Town. From the body of the pottery merchant she jumped into the body of a plain looking tea server who went from room to room pouring tea for guests of the tea house. Head bowed to the floor she would only listen to the conversation of guests because it was not proper for a tea server to speak to guests, only pour tea into empty cups. After years of nothing the Yūrei decides to possess the bodies of men because who else would talk of young women with pretty faces. So when a gambler, of the Dagger gang,

Go Yen, Seven Bridges

brought his family to the tea house the Yūrei jumped from the tea server to the gambler's body. Though his appearance did not change his seven year old daughter, young and being female, hides within her mind a sense transforming the young girl to act as a Geiger counter, of sorts, detecting not radioactivity but the humanity of a person's soul. It was just all the little pieces of unusual behavior she had not observed before the tea house visit. Since her mother did not say anything and since Grandma and Grandpa did not question their son's behavior who would understand the revelations from a seven year old girl who barely could read or write.

One night the gambler tagged along with his Dagger gang members and while getting drunk on warm sake rose a mixed up conversation of songs for drinking and their admiration of a young girl with a perfect oval face with almond eyes a long neck framed by dark falling hair upon straight shoulders. Ah! Just wait until she becomes a young woman then none of you will have the slightest chance of enjoying her company. You will see a long line of big purse carrying suitors at the front door of the Red Water Inn. You can bet on that! And so this was the biggest lead the Yūrei obtained in all the time since her wrongful death schemed by Yu uga na.

Although drunk to the tilt the gambler staggered and tripped his way to the Red Water Inn. The Yūrei informed the Red Water Inn greeter "I am an uncle who for the longest time has been searching for my niece. Yu' uga na was a little girl as he lowered his hand, the height equal to his waist,

Go Yen, Seven Bridges

with a perfect oval face with almond eyes a long neck framed by dark falling hair upon straight shoulders. One would not forget if your eyes fell upon her face. If you have any information of her whereabouts you kind sir would unite a grateful uncle who lost his niece.” The greeter responded “Well I have being inviting customers to the Red Water Inn for half of my life and the only one who fits that description is a young girl whose grandparents who were guests of the inn owner The Fist. I recall they were not from here but lived in a small fishing village on the Pacific coast over on the east side of the Shark Teeth Mountains. Yes like you said one would never forget how beautiful a young girl could be. Wait here and I will inquiry with The Fist to volunteer more information of his past guests”. “No don’t bother the boss.” replied the Yūrei knowing The Fist was a dangerous gambler. “Thank you kind sir and make no mention of my inquiry.” Then Yūrei clapped his hands together and did not bother to go back home, instead, the Yūrei went back to the Ghost bridge and waited for the right body then jumped into the body of a peddler of fishing supplies crossing the Ghost bridge travelling on his way to the Southern Highway to the east coast of Japan.

Upon arrival at the village named “Six on ice One on my hook” the Yūrei makes his rounds tempting fishermen by showing gadgets to hook more and bigger fish all the while gathering answers as to whereabouts of Yu uga na. Finally one of the older fishermen said “I can tell you the village secret but I want all your stuff you say will make me catch more and bigger fish” The Yūrei got excited showing

Go Yen, Seven Bridges

an intense smile replied “You can get the whole shebang when you reveal the secret.” “Well the rumor was that some bad dudes from Haunted Blood Town were like you searching for the same fine looking girl. They were told the girl drowned after falling into the sea during a terrible storm, but, the truth of the matter is the girl escaped the village and disappeared into the Shark Teeth Mountains to live and die in a Ninja village.” A disappointed Yūrei made several jumps from unknowing possessed bodies for the next one hundred sixty seven years from the village back to the Ghost Bridge, back to the Red Water Inn, then into a sake and beer maker on a boat to Thousand Sleeping Shipwrecks Golden Castle. There by chance the Yūrei possessed the body of a foreign sailor. “Hey you grab hold of your sick shipmate then you and I will carry him to the Japanese Doctor Office.” instructed the Captain. Once there the Captain said “You better wait outside in the street. Take a smoke break but don’t bother anyone and I mean especially any pretty women passersby. Understood?” The sailor watched the Captain being greeted by a young doctor with perfect oval face with almond eyes a long neck framed by dark falling hair upon straight shoulders. After the Captain and sailor were aboard the ship the sailor lay in his bunk and started plotting his scheme of seeking revenge. Unfortunately, that dark night the ship’s mooring was unhooked and the Yūrei had no opportunity to leave the ship only to wander the routes around Southeast Asia, around the coastline of Africa and England. Eventually the Yūrei heard of a British expedition exploring a Northwest Passage through to Artic Ocean to

GO YEN

Go Yen, Seven Bridges

reach the gold riches of Japan. The expedition got stuck in the frozen Artic and eventually ran out of supplies. The Yūrei jumped from one survivor to the next survivor until there was none left. Not even one of the rats that roamed inside the ship's hull There buried in the layers of snow and ice lays the Yūrei waiting for some drastic change of climate or another ship of foolish explorers

GO YEN



Go Yen, Seven Bridges

Bridge Four “Dragon Bridge” and Mizukoi



The next bridge was named the Dragon Bridge freely constructed by an immigrant Chinese Bridge builder who created two purple arches with elaborate golden dragons

Go Yen, Seven Bridges

clinging upon the arches to cross the river. This bridge was a warning of the historical danger from the western empire across the Sea of Japan. But the fact was all countries were a danger to another country because of conflicting self-interests.

It was the seventh week of her gathering expedition into the Shark Teeth Mountains and Mizukoi hiked a little over half of the journey passing the Never Ending Cave, the Never Ending Snake Pit, the Seven pools of Hebi River, and spending a day in the fishing town named “Six on ice One on my Hook”. Mizukoi thought how extremely friendly the village people were. Often an old person walking toward her would acknowledge her by giving a friendly nod and greet her as though they knew her from not so long ago. No villager could deny Mizukoi had a perfect oval face with almond eyes a long neck framed by dark falling hair upon straight shoulders so familiar to the older villagers.

{Desolation Row}

Mizukoi then hiked around the southern tip of the island reaching the highway into the Haunted Blood Town and its seven bridges. While pausing on the Dragon Bridge she felt the wind whispering past her and she thought this gathering journey was the best part of being a doctor. Not being ungrateful for modern medical training from the foreign doctor in California. Next she thought, no the best part is making patients well and healthy so they live a long life. In the old days people thought eating dragon's scales in a healthy soup or eating raw dragon's flesh with mustard in

Go Yen, Seven Bridges

soy sauce would give them a seven hundred year life span. The only big problem was to find a dragon. How unlikely! Mizukoi admired the fine artistic carving and stood on her toes and watched the swift current under the bridge. "Don't you fall into that water below Lucky cause no matter how much raw dragon flesh you eat there is no way you would survive." "These dragons look so real I wonder if at night when no one is around they uncurl theselves and fly away into the Shark Teetjh Mountains. Maybe we should stay here at night but on the other hand maybe not." Mizukoi raised her almond eyes to the sunny skies and so did Lucky. They decided not to waste such a fine day and weather and not linger.

From Haunted Blood Town she turned West and arranged for travel accomdations to Sea coast and boarded a Shark Clan ship and enjoyed a two day cruise back to Thousand Sleeping Shipwreck Golden Castle. She faced into the sea breeze and breathed in the ocean aroma. As the ship slid on the water and she enjoyed the panoramic scenery of sand dunes and wind swept trees, a nosy passenger asked Mizukoi

"I know you from the Doctor's office. My family has been treated by the Doctor's family for generations. I saw the loading of a medcine cart so can I assume you are returning from foraging natural remedies from the Shark Teeth Mountains?"

Mizukoi replied " Yes.As Doctor and her honored ancestors have done I am indeed returning after a sucessful harvesting of precious medical wonders that Mother Nature

Go Yen, Seven Bridges

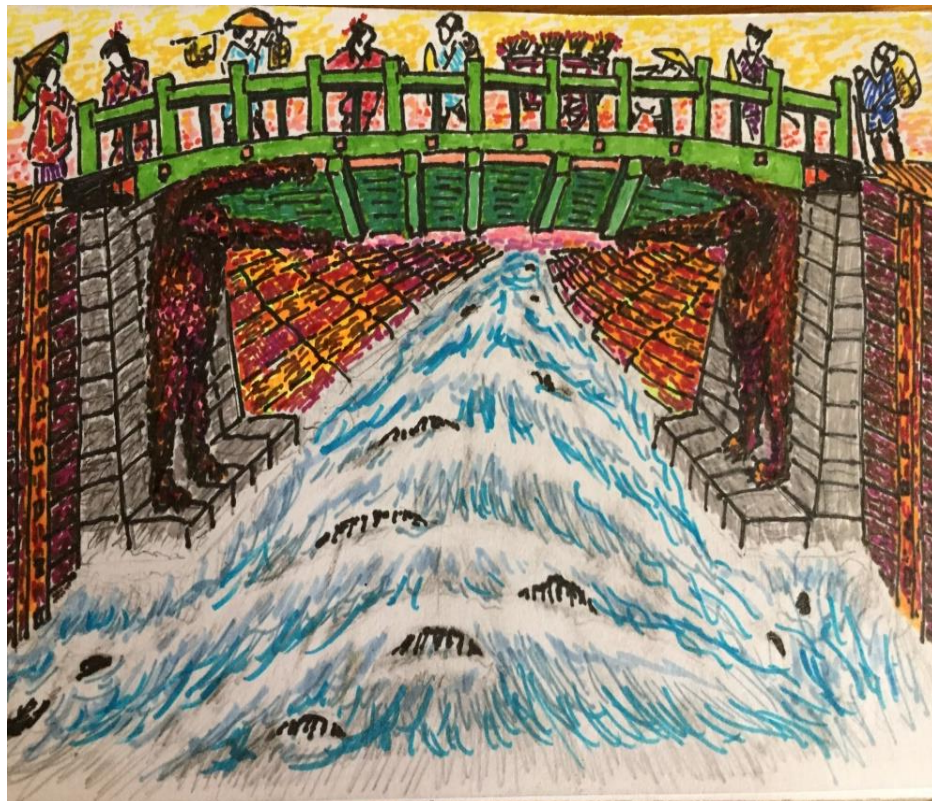
grows in those inland mountains. When pulverized into powders or dried and seep in hot water or inhaled with steam the natural cures are simply amazing. And can I ask what you were doing in Haunted Blood Town?" asked Mizukoi.

"Oh for sure! I brew sake and this new Gaijin {foreigner} drink called beeru in Thousand Sleeping Shipwrecks Golden Castle and sell my sake and beeru to the Red Water Inn. If you have a chance to stay at the Red Water Inn please try my beeru. It is named Shark beeru. The bottle label could not handle the way too long brand name Thousand Sleeping Shipwrecks Golden Castle. Ha, ah, ha. Tell you what I will have one of my delivery men drop off a couple of beeru bottles at the Doctor's office. No charge."



Go Yen, Seven Bridges

Bridge Five “Kuma Bridge” and Harue *{Bridge Over Troubled Waters}*



On a cool crisp morning Harue slipped out of Grandma's house after packing a backpack with a bento lunch, snacks,

Go Yen, Seven Bridges

and a bamboo canteen of water. The previous night Harue said to Granny (Obasan).

“Obasan I would like to hike to the Kuma Bridge tomorrow. Would you please allow me to see this marvelous bridge?”

Grandma (Obasan) replied “Of course you should see this bridge named for the Whispering Bear Clan who hides in the Shark Teeth Mountains. Be sure to take lunch and mizu (water) and don’t speak to any weird strangers.”

Harue walked across the “Shark Bridge” remembering the tale of Lady Red Camellia and the history lesson of the Bear stomped and ate the Fox war. Next she slowly walked over the Snake Bridge because Harue was afraid of snakes and worried about waking up the sleeping spirit snake. Harue did not understand the meaning of the honor .She did not know the symbolic Snake namesake given to Lady Red Ruby for both her strength of the long sword and long spear (Naginata) was also for being flexible as a strong sinewy rope. But she did read her history lesson that Lady Red Ruby died a warrior’s death in the Bear stomps the Spider War.

The walking pace across the Ghost Bridge was even much faster. She heard about the drowning of the Circus owner’s daughter and crazy old lady lying dead under the covering of bamboo mats. Harue did not pause while on the bridge like others did like the red face vegetable farmer resting from pulling his two wheeled wooden car and sneaking a slow slip from a sake bottle. Harue had no need to be afraid because she had Lucky carried in her back sack

Go Yen, Seven Bridges

with her black furry head and pointed ears popping out. Only when a bad guy would take a too long glance at Harue would a hissing emerge from the back sack. Finally, Harue reached the Kuma Bridge and saw at once the busy people crossing in both directions.

At the middle of the bridge Harue sat down on the side her feet dangling while hugging a vertical post with her right arm. She could barely see the two giant bears supporting the bridge with people crossing. My god the bear is huge and majestic but they look friendly. She unwrapped her lunch of rice balls and dried silver fish and green pickled cucumber. Before taking the first bite she tore off a small bit of rice and silver dried fish then tossed the bits into the river then clapping her hands together not once, not twice but three times as she lowered her head in prayer. Then she fed Lucky and ate.

Grandma instilled in her homeschool teaching to respect all forms of life small and big by offering edibles back to Nature. There was a constant flow of eager vendors, happy farmers, colorful geisha, and strutting Samurai going to and fro. Harue wondered if she would ever encounter the Whispering bears in the Shark Teeth Mountains. What a delight that would be. Maybe one day, maybe one day.

GO YEN



Go Yen, Seven Bridges

Bridge Six "Tsuru Bridge" and Reimiko



These were dark times while Japan was at war in China and Korea. This was her third gathering expedition while her

Go Yen, Seven Bridges

husband took care of the office in Thousand Sleeping Shipwrecks Golden Castle Town. Reimiko had travelled through Philippines, Southeast Asia, India, China, and Mongolia and learned things about her inner guide and the world. She remembered the pattern of the seven stars making up the constellation Pleiades before the secret holder tossed the stones in all directions and felt fully satisfied on the accomplishment of returning the Red Eye Dagger to its rightful owner especially when her country was at war for all the wrong reasons.

While in the Shark Teeth Mountains she had traced the journeys of Harue and Todoshi in a reverse direction going as far North to the Yamasato village where everything under the tree canopy turned blue. Such magic! She traded her medical skills for simple lodging and she got a bonus small wooden sculpture of a bear clenching a salmon with its teeth. At the snow monkey warm water pool she went into ice cave hoping the Tsuru would appear but Tsuru did not to come forth. After accomplishing her goal of filling all the seven by seven wooden cubicles she stayed one night in the village “Six on ice One on my hook” then took the Southern highway to Haunted Blood town.

{Memories}

Now at the Tsuru Bridge she felt a sense of satisfaction. An elegant Tsuru stood with his head cocked and looking at Reimiko bowing his slender white neck and spread the black tipped wings and flew above the silver moonlit yellow rice stacks in the fields and sliver river. Before Reimiko left she purchased a small porcelain likeness of a Tsuru.

Go Yen, Seven Bridges



From here she caught a river boat headed downriver to the sea of Japan and then a merchant ship North to the Thousand Sleeping Shipwreck Golden Castle town.

GO YEN



Go Yen, Seven Bridges

Bridge Seven “Red Bridge” and Princess Yūki



It was the farthest bridge from Haunted Blood Town so on this secret excursion Princess Yūki was appreciatively escorted by her Lady in Waiting. There was an element of danger because both were dressed in commoner attire and if

Go Yen, Seven Bridges

something bad happened well they would have a hard time proving their true identities.

“My Lady Yūki we must take extra precautions but must act naturally like the others we meet.”

Yūki replied “Yes we will speak and act as sisters on a picnic trip”

Giggling the Lady in waiting suggested “I will be the younger sister and you can be my much older sister.” But then you will need to listen and follow my orders, me being the older sister” said Yūki.

And so Yūki and her younger sister watched the circling sharks underneath the Shark Bridge, bent down and touched the ruby red eye of the snake at the Snake Bridge.

At the Snake Bridge, Yūki purchased a small gift for her Lady in Waiting. The toy was rattling bluish gray clay shaped gold fish. The balding thin, white hair elderly, hunched over wrinkled woman said “Ah! This is a special one. It is not the regular baby rattler a mother places into the tiny hands of a baby, No definitely, not a toy for children. It has travelled a very long distance and it is an ancient one. The fish tale is it contains bone pieces of a fisherman who walked upon the water. Some say it cleans the heart and soul of the holder. Ah! But who can repeat such claims of a fish tale when so many fishermen have a tendency to exaggerate the size of their catch. May I ask, is this purchase for yourself or someone else” ask the inquisitive vendor.

Yūki replied “Well it is for my younger sister standing over there looking into the ruby red eyes of the amazing snake inlay crossing the Snake Bridge. She is one of a kind. The

Go Yen, Seven Bridges

number of times she has placed my needs over her own, I cannot count.” The old vendor acknowledged Yūki’s praise by saying “Then this rattling gray clay fish would a very appropriate gift for someone so very especial to your heart. I shall be very careful wrapping the gift in the purest white paper I have. Tell her my fish tale and someday its significance may be realized.”

“Oh! My heart is forever thankful upon receiving such a treasure. I will always cherish your gift. When we are back in your room let’s pick out an appropriate display setting in which both you and I can admire.” spoke, the younger sister, the Lady in Waiting.

In the years after the Yūki and Lady on Waiting’s deaths the clay fish remained wrapped in a red plush square cloth in a display glass cabinet in the princess’ room of the now tourist attraction of the Castle of Lake of Love Blood. The caption next to the fish read “Clay fish rattler given to her Lady in Waiting by the Princess Yūki”



Go Yen, Seven Bridges

They quickly crossed the Ghost bridge not daring to ask foolish questions, admired the Chinese red and golden dragons guarding the Dragon bridge, checked out the two huge bears supporting the Kuma bridge, fed small fish to the Tsuru at the Stork bridge, and finally walked to their final destination the Red Bridge.

“Well, older sis here we are!” and the Lady in Waiting laughed out loud while using her kimono sleeve to hide her open mouth exposing her bare teeth. Approaching the Red Bridge Yūki thought how amazing the appearance of checker patterned approaches, the green matted walkway, red handrailing, and wide panorama of the Shark Teeth Mountains and the ancient Buddhist monastery. Yūki felt the kind of bouncy walking on the green matted covering of the bridge walkway.

It was while sitting on the edge of the checkered approach with legs and plain kimono folded on grass mats they saw that renowned Buddhist monk Todoshi crossing the bridge.

“Would we be in bad behavior if we introduced ourselves and offered to share our meal and mizu (water)?” whispers Lady Yūki.

“I don’t see why not. The most he can do is refuse but how could he turn us down since we are the two prettiest wild white daisies on the river bank.” replied the Lady in Waiting.

Introducing themselves as sisters and Yūki offered a share of food and drink for a story or two.

Go Yen, Seven Bridges

Yūki asked “Are you the monk Todoshi? Are you the talked about monk who has travelled all through the Shark Teeth Mountains since the Battle of the Never Ending Cave?”

Todoshi bowed not once or twice but three times “Yes I could be me. Yes one would see me as a travel worn monk. Yes by the wear and tear of my flip flops you are wise ones” and he happily sat cross legged in between both ladies.

Todoshi pointed to the monastery he left long ago to seek the truth in himself. He seems to be the world’s most interesting man! He had read all the important works of Chinese, Korean, and Japanese philosophies, seen the artworks of well- known scrolls and silkscreen panels, recited the most treasured haiku poems, but best of all he had an extensive knowledge of food preparations. He could simply nibble at their prepared food and state the ingredients.

He thought to himself “There are some very expensive spices in the food but I shall not mention it for now.” Todoshi noticed even for a sister the younger daisy oddly gave hints of shielding her older sister from harm was stronger than a natural bond like a duty to die for a sister.

Todoshi mentioned the Master Monk instructions to observe the wildlife to understand his own natural behavior.

Princess Yūki asked “Did the observations of wildlife in the Shark Teeth Mountains help with understanding your true self?”

Go Yen, Seven Bridges

Todoshi answered “Yes, for example the Tsuru does not kill except to feed itself. Tsuru does not spend efforts exhilarating one-self when the prey is killed as if there was a referee to call out an un-sportsmanlike foul for taunting a dead opponent. My behavior does not include taunting when I win an argument. And I always thank the forest spirits for giving me a meal. Whether it is a single green mint leaf or a tough but edible purple root I am grateful for nourishment.

The years spent in the Shark Teeth Mountains have shown me humans are not the dominate species. All other living species do not exist for the pleasure or entertainment of humans. And like the colony of ants, in our culture humans live in different stratum where those privileged residing in the castle are considered above the lower lords living in smaller castles who are above the Samurai who are above the merchants who are above the artists who are above the farmers who are above the peasants who do menial work, such as, tanning, ditch digging. And even of the genders men and women the later do not have any say in government policy. In Ants there is the Queen and no king. All others serve the Queen. Here in the human situation all are blessed with a thinking brain to create a fairer society based on gender equality.

I have observed the analogy of the life cycle and the cycle of water. We all come from the same source like the rising moisture from the ocean and become wisps of clouds drifting at the will of the wind. Some return to the source living a shorten existence but the immense remainder become raindrops of many different shapes and

Go Yen, Seven Bridges

destinations. Some transform into gentle raindrops at the beginning of spring and others become angry belting raindrops of destructive force of a spiraling typhoon.

{There but for Fortune}

By the 'Only by fortune' some become human teardrops serving as evidence of emotions in happy and sad times. Have you ever cried? Your teardrops are part of the endless water cycle. Recall the taste of tears that reach your lips, remember the salty taste of teardrops and isn't that the same taste of the ocean, the source?

The last that survive often clash against high mountains and drop as individual snowflakes of perfect airy geometric shapes floating and falling and laying on the ground layer upon layer until spring then form drops of water, trickle down from crevasse to gully to valley into a river often creating loud noisy grumbling and rumbling 'shouting get out of our way!' when something obstructs our away back to the source. Some snowflakes become trapped in time like the form of ice in a glacier slowly moving to the source while slowly changing the form of the environment turning mountains into u-shaped valleys and carving out boulders and turning such into pebbles.

We are both destroyers and creators in a single process. I always repeat my morning mantra 'Strong like water, water gives life, water purifies, water cleanse, water is patience' Often when I am sitting or strolling while raining I would thank each raindrop for touching my soul. While quenching my thirst at a trickling stream I would also be thankful and most of all when I cried I would reverently wipe my eyes dry"

Go Yen, Seven Bridges

In a simple phrase all living stuff are recycled” and that is a condensed lesson book of the trail travels through the Shark Teeth Mountains.”

“Where do you sisters live and what work do you perform?” asked Todoshi.

He considered asking their names but considered it was impolite to ask especially since he had suspicions they were not sisters as they claimed. The older sister hid her smile with a subtle hand motion and soft laughter with a pink and blue fan but the younger sister straighten her posture and replied

“We both live at home under our parents’ roof and we help mother with her household duties and assist father taking care of the bookkeeping responsibilities. Sometimes days are fast paced and other like today are more relaxed so we take hikes and enjoy the surrounding scenery. One day we expect to hike beyond the Red Bridge and see what adventures lie on the East coast of Japan and maybe return through the Shark Teeth Mountains. Wouldn’t that be a trip! But for now this bridge is the farthest from home we have walked. It is nice and cool with the strong mountain breeze. See how the reeds along the river bank dance to the breeze.”

Todoshi observed their kimono and footwear showed some wear and tear with some loose hanging threads but the older sister’s fingernails were very clean and well-kept more like ladies in the castle than for a merchant’s daughter.

“Well two pretty sisters like you two must always be on guard for although there are good scenery in the Shark

Go Yen, Seven Bridges

Teeth Mountains there are a lot of bad stuff up there pointing to the mountains.” warned Todoshi.

“Sister please show Todoshi the clay fish” said Yūki. The Lady in Waiting carefully unwraps, the pure white paper and hands over the bluish gray clay fish as Todoshi bowed deeply his forehead almost touching the bare ground showing a sense of deepest respect. The Lady in Waiting said “Yūki purchased my gift at the Snake Bridge. The old woman vendor told Yūki a fisherman’s tale “What makes it rattle are bits of bone from a carpenter who died a long time ago in a distant land. She said he could walk on water.” It rattles with such a peaceful rhythm which quiets my heart and soul.” The Buddhist monk whispered to both “I sense the presence of a powerful but gentle one. I am not sure why the bones of a fisherman can emit such feeling but I feel the bones are sacred and very significant. Young sister you must take care of it for sure someday others will want your gift for their own deeds.” Todoshi gently places the gray clay gold fish onto the pure white paper and carefully wraps the gold fish, After it was wrapped Todoshi fixed his posture into a meditation form, legs crossed, hands joined below his belly button, and back straight. He then chanted not once, not twice, but three times over and over again for seven times. Yūki and the Lady in Waiting sat through these solemn minutes.

As the sun went well past its highest point Todoshi and the sisters began to pack up, bowed not once, not twice, but three times to pay respects, and Todoshi once again

GO YEN

Go Yen, Seven Bridges

thanked the sisters for sharing their meal, and wave
goodbye.

“I am so glad we came this far. otherwise, we would have not met Todoshi, the most famous monk from the Shark Teeth Mountain Monastery.” said Yūki. “And my goodness he had such a reverent feeling of the gray clay gold fish rattler. I am beginning to wonder if the fisherman tale is totally true. Don’t you think so?” commented the Lady in Waiting. “we didn’t do so badly for being two pretty daisies sitting on the river bank. And although you bought it as my gift I want us to share its blessings but let us keep the fisherman tale a secret between us. No one else needs to know.” Such was the only encounter of Princess Yūki, the Lady on Waiting, and the wandering Buddhist monk Todoshi.

{Somewhere Over The Rainbow}

BOOK FOUR END

<i>page</i>	<i>Song Title or Lyric</i>	<i>Publisher/ writer</i>	<i>Album/Year</i>
127	A bad moon rising	<i>Fantasy/John C. Fogerty</i>	<i>Bayou Country/1969</i>
130	blood, sweat, and tears	<i>Album Title</i>	<i>Blood, Sweat, and Tears/1968</i>
164	on the road again	<i>?/Willie Nelson</i>	<i>Honeysuckle Rose/2005</i>
213	<i>Where have all the young men gone?</i>	<i>Columbia Records/ Pete Seeger</i>	<i>Where Have All the Flowers Gone/1967</i>

Book 3/
Chap. 4/
pg. 253

*Lethal Beauty, Samurai
Weapons and Amor by
Andreas Marks*

*Publisher –
International Arts &
Artists*

Postscript

After asking a friend coin collector to research the history of my coin and getting an unsuspected result I decided to write a postscript to address concerns of any Numismatist who might read my story "Go Yen" and expecting whatever the true history is attached to my coin. Since an honest guy, who believed what he knew of the coin history was true, and the coin was a gift, I cannot disrespect the giver's intention. So whatever a Numismatist may uncover I respect the giver's intent. And after all this is a fiction and the only rule is imagination is king.

Thank you to Kathy Fay for volunteering to read and edit my story. She made to story easier to read.

Afterword

Royden, my oldest brother, became very ill and laid in the I.C.U. at Kona Hospital. I brought my working draft of Go Yen so my oldest niece Desi could occupy her mind on something else. While in a small waiting room she quietly read through several pages then what happened next was a total surprise. Desi asked when Dad told me about his connectivity to the number seven. I said I never knew anything about it then Desi told me that while reading Go Yen she truly thought I had known of Royden's affinity to the number seven. The memory of the moment will always be part of my story and though his physical life ended his memory will always be woven into the words of Go Yen.

And so like my story from preface to afterword I have come full circle and feel at peace with my oldest brother.

