

6. 黄泉の国 “The World of the Dead: the Land of Yomi”

Hereupon Izanaki-no-mikoto, wishing to see his wife Izanami-no-mikoto again, went after her to the Land of Yomi. The door of the hall was opened and Izanami-no-mikoto came out to greet him, when Izanaki-no-mikoto spoke to her, “Oh, my dear wife, the lands we made together are not complete yet, so please come back.” Izanami-no-mikoto answered, “It is a pity that you did not come sooner. I have already eaten the food cooked in the underworld, the Land of Yomi. But I am deeply grateful to you, my dear husband, for coming all the way to the land of the dead to see me. So I will persuade the god of Yomi to let me return with you. Please do not try to find me while I am gone.” Thus saying, Izanami-no-mikoto went back into the hall. Izanaki-no-mikoto waited for a long time, too long to wait anymore. So he broke off one of the large end-teeth of his comb, Yutsu-tsuma-gushi, which he was wearing in the left bundle of his hair, and lit it. He looked into the hall with the lighted comb tooth, and saw his wife’s corpse, with maggots swarming over and rolling down from her body. There was Great-Thunder in her head, Fire-Thunder in her chest, Black-Thunder in her belly, Crack-Thunder in her genitals, Young-Thunder in her left hand, Earth-Thunder in her right hand, Sounding-Thunder in her left foot, Reclining-Thunder in her right foot. There were eight thunder-deities altogether.

Hereupon, Izanaki-no-mikoto was frightened at the sight of his wife’s decomposed body and started to flee, when Izanami-no-mikoto said, “You shamed me by seeing my ugliest figure,” and dispatched the hags of Yomi to chase him. So Izanaki-no-mikoto threw down a black vine wreath, which he wore on his head, and from the vine wreath immediately grew grapes. He fled while the hags were eating the grapes. When they chased him again, he threw down (the sacred) Yutsu-tsuma-gushi, which he wore in the right bundle of his hair, and from the comb immediately grew bamboo-shoots. While the hags were pulling and eating the bamboo-shoots, he ran further away. Now, Izanami-no-mikoto dispatched the eight thunder deities leading a thousand and five hundred warriors of Yomi to chase him. Izanaki-no-mikoto unsheathed his long sharp sword which he kept belted, and waved it behind him to flee from them. Still being chased, Izanaki-no-mikoto finally reached the foot of the slope leading to the exit. He plucked three peaches from the tree there and threw them at his pursuers, who turned and ran away. Izanaki-no-mikoto said to the peaches, “Just as you saved me, you should save the people who live in Ashi-hara-no-naka-tsu-kuni when they are in trouble.” Then he gave the holy name, Oho-kamu-zu-mi-no-mikoto, to the peaches.

Finally, Izanami-no-mikoto herself almost caught up with him. Izanaki-no-mikoto, by the skin of his teeth, got out of Yomo-tsu-hira-saka, and blocked it up with a gigantic boulder which could not be moved by less than 1,000 men. Standing on either side of the boulder, they exchanged parting words. Izanami-no-mikoto said, “My dear husband, as you shamed me by seeing my decomposed body and sealing me up with a gigantic boulder, I will strangle 1,000 of your people to death every day.” Izanaki-no-mikoto said, “My dear wife, if you do that, I will build 1,500 birthing huts every day. This explains why 1,000 people inevitably die every day and 1,500 babies are inevitably born

伊邪那岐命と伊邪那美命 “Izanaki-no-mikoto and Izanami-no-mikoto”

every day. Now, Izanami-no-mikoto is called Yomotsu-o'o-kami, (because she brings death to many people). She is also called Chi-shiki-no-o'o-kami, because she herself chased and caught up with Izanaki-no-mikoto. The boulder that blocked up Yomi-no-saka is called Chi-gaeshi-no-o'o-kami; it is also called Blocking-Yomido-no-o'o-kami. The so-called Yomo-tsu-hira-saka is now called Ifuyazaka in the province of Izumo.