



# The Magic Tea Kettle

ONCE upon a time there lived a poor man who had an antique store. One day he found a *tanuki* (raccoon dog) caught in a trap. Feeling sorry for the creature, he set it free.

The *tanuki* visited the man that night. "Thank you very much for your kindness," he said. "As a token of my gratitude, I will tell you something valuable. The priest at the temple is looking for a tea kettle. I will disguise myself as a tea kettle so that you can sell it to him." The *tanuki* then somersaulted into the air and transformed himself into a splendid gold tea kettle.

The man took the tea kettle to the temple priest the next day, who said, "What a beautiful tea kettle!" The priest was very pleased with the kettle, and paid a high price for it.

After the priest brought the tea kettle back with him to the temple, he ordered a novice priest to wash it. The novice priest promptly went to the river behind the temple and began to scrub the tea kettle hard. Suddenly the tea kettle cried, "You're hurting my bottom! Please wash me a bit more gently." The novice priest was astounded, and told the priest, "The tea kettle spoke!" But the priest did not believe him. "Nonsense! It is not possible for a tea kettle to speak," he said.

The priest then decided to boil some water. He filled the tea kettle and placed it on the fire. The *tanuki*, disguised as the tea kettle, was shocked. "It's hot!" he screamed. Unable to stand the flames, the *tanuki* half-transformed



back into his true form and ran back to the poor man's home.

That night, the *tanuki* offered an idea to the man. "Let's go into town together," he suggested. "I will remain in this tea kettle form and perform a tightrope walk, so please gather some people to watch me."

So the man and the *tanuki* went into town the next day, and the man set up a show tent. "Come one, come all, and see the amazing tea kettle tightrope walking show!" he loudly announced at the entrance. Inside, the *tanuki* tea kettle nimbly walked across the rope, drummed his belly and sang.

Word spread quickly that there was an amazing tea kettle that performs stunts. The tightrope-walking tea kettle became very popular, and day after day the show drew enthusiastic crowds.

And so, thanks to the *tanuki*'s help, the man became very wealthy. The *tanuki* remained in the form of the little tea kettle, and eventually lost its ability to move. Eventually it was returned to the priest at the temple, where it was safely stored as a valuable temple treasure. 🍵

## THE TEMPLE ASSOCIATED WITH "THE MAGIC TEA KETTLE"

Morinji, a Buddhist temple of the Soto School located in Horikuchō, Tatebayashi City in Gunma Prefecture, is closely associated with the legend of "The Magic Tea Kettle." Various *tanuki*-themed goods from all over Japan as well as stuffed *tanuki* are on display at the temple. Throughout the temple grounds are Shigaraki stoneware *tanuki*, and the magic tea kettle owned by the temple can be viewed by the public.

