

Reference [3]

Ghost in Kamaishi City

By Shinya Nishimaru (Originally published in 1959)

It was April 1946 and I was 23 years old when I arrived at Kamaishi City to start working at the fisheries experimental station. Since Kamaishi City had been bombed by a warship of the United States Armed Forces the previous year, there was no official lodging house. I had to stay in a room of the canned seafood factory next to the experimental station, piling up vacant boxes of canned food to use it as my bed. It really looked like really the room of a war refugee.

Because I wanted to live on my own in a new town at that time, I had no friends or acquaintances. At night, there was no one around except a janitor who also lived in the factory, so I usually walked to the downtown to enjoy the mah-jongg game at the house of my fellow worker. In those days, there was no better mah-jongg game player in town than me, so I was always welcomed warmly by the other members. I always stayed at his home till midnight, and walked back to my factory on weary feet.

One night in June, I was going home after midnight and just getting to the factory, when I found a lady leaning on the concrete wall. The back yard of the factory and the road were separated by this concrete wall, which was one meter high. On the other side of the wall was the slope of a lawn.

Since Kamaishi City is located in the northern part of Honshu Island in Japan, its climate is cold and not suitable for rice cultivation. I often saw a woman carrying rice from the inland for trade, taking a short rest leaning on the wall, so, though it was late at night, I didn't think it strange and went ahead on the road. There was a bright moon that night. As soon as I passed just in front of the woman, I felt that the figure of the woman had vanished. So, I quickly took a backward glance -- and found no one there. I looked around and looked over the other side of the concrete wall, but could not see any living creature. So, I thought it had merely been an illusion coming from tiredness or something else, and I went back to my room and slept.

I'd forgotten this mysterious woman for several days, but four days later, I found a woman leaning on the concrete wall again when I was going back to my room after playing mah-jongg late into the night. I stopped just 10 meters before her and stared hard at her and confirmed she really was a human being. In this district, it was still cold

in the night in June, but this woman wore *yukata*, a light, informal summer kimono. I like mountaineering and am not so sensitive to the cold, but this lady wore only *yukata*, and no one wore *yukata* in this season in this prefecture. So, I thought she had been born in the northern territories of Japan. Though this night is not as light as before, I noticed she was a light-complexioned and good-looking lady, and she looked about 27 or 28 years old. Because she was neatly dressed, she couldn't be a blue-collar worker, such as a woman peddler. As I knew she was a real human, I felt relieved in some sense, but went ahead carefully, taking a side glance at her. Although, I was continuously looking at her out of the corner of my eye during this time, she disappeared again as soon as I'd crossed in front of her. So I felt angry toward this unknown phenomenon now, and I decided to catch her the next night.

The next night was cloudy and dark. I wondered whether she would appear on such a night or not. However, when I reached the wall of the factory after I had spent the evening downtown, I could see her standing there. It was very peculiar that I could see the contours of her body from the top of her head to the bottom of her feet, even on such a dark night. Since I walked the same roadside as she stood on, I could approach within one meter's distance. She had a nice profile, and I'd never seen such a beautiful lady in Kamaishi City before. Since the foot of a traditional ghost in Japan has a vague outline in the dark, I looked carefully at her feet, but she wore *geta* (Japanese wooden clogs) with red thongs. I could see her toenails. She was completely human.

She wore the same *yukata* as the day before, which was made of cotton with a peony flower pattern and a yellow *obi*, a Japanese style sash, which made her look like a child but not strange, as if she had just been bathing.

"Good evening," I greeted her, but she stared at the black mountains of Heita on the opposite side of Kamaishi Bay without paying any attention to me. Two or three hairs fell onto her forehead when I stared at her pale face. I could even see the fine soft hair on her face. Suddenly I noticed she stared without blinking. She really was there and looked like a human, but she didn't have any humanity. She was really heartless.

"Hello!" I said and tried to tap her with my finger. My finger felt no resistance and her figure completely disappeared in the air as soon as I touched her skin. A cold shiver ran down my spine. I waited for her re-appearance for several minutes, putting up with my fear, but she did not return that night.

The next night, when I went out of the factory at midnight carrying a handy club in

my hand, I saw her standing there already. I approached very near and asked her.

“Are you human?” I said. But she didn’t reply.

“You’ve once been a human being?”

“Are you a ghost?”

“If you can speak, please answer my question.”

“You’ve appeared just in front of me. I’m a quite stranger to you. So, do you want to ask me to do something? I’ll do anything you want so far as I can. Please speak to me!”

“If you are appearing in fun, don’t tease me!”

“If you keep quiet, I’ll beat you with this stick! OK? are you ready? One, two, three!”

I heard only the sound of my club beating the concrete wall. She was already gone. I swung the club shouting to the vacant air, “Don’t come here anymore!”

After that, I often saw her standing in the roadside, but I went a long way around her for it was awful when she vanished just in front of me. In the meanwhile, my brother living in Tokyo and my senior chemistry professor recommended that I consult a doctor in a large hospital because I often wrote to them about this ghost lady. I also thought that something was wrong with my brain, so I had a medical examination at the Kamaishi City hospital. However, they couldn’t find anything wrong with me and told me that I was completely sane. I was quite confused, for if I were mad, it would explain all those phenomena.

I asked to the medical doctor to run a more detailed examination on me, but he said that I was perfectly sane. So I said to him, “If you are a doctor, you are a kind of scientist. So, please come with me and confirm the existence of ghost!” But he only laughed. I believe that he was afraid of the ghost at heart and not a scientist. If he believed his diagnosis, he should confirm whether the ghost existed or not with his own eyes.

I wondered why such a complete stranger would appear in front of me. I was afraid that she bore a grudge against someone who looked like me. Fortunately, I lived in a small city, so it was very easy to find information about her. I thought that there must have been a beautiful woman who died at the age of 27 or 28 in the neighborhood. I described her features and clothes to several people and found out that there was a lady who drowned herself about twelve years ago. At that time, this site had deep inlets, which were reclaimed for this factory and fisheries experimental station. She was jilted by a man whom she had been seeing for several years, and committed suicide at age of

27. It was said that she died wearing a peony pattern *yukata* and that she had placed her *geta* with red thongs neatly on the precipice. Considering this evidence, I was convinced that was why she appeared in front of me wearing *yukata* in this season, but was not sure if she wore *geta*. She had left them on the precipice so she should appear with bare feet! I felt relieved to know that the man who drove her to commit suicide didn't look anything like me. Anyway, although I now knew the background of the ghost, it was completely useless in settling this annoying matter.

One night, I visited the house of the oil tank guard to spend the evening chatting about all sorts of things, for the guard's wife had been born in Gowa village in the neighborhood of Magome town, Gifu prefecture, which is the hometown of my mother. I went into the lavatory of that house and looked casually out of the window, and then saw that ghost lady leaning on the oil tank. I was frightened to know that the ghost appeared in different places, but left the lavatory pretending not to recognize anything. However, the wife of the guard and her maid knew that something was wrong with me. I tried to talk tough, but they said my face was pale and my lips were purple, so they would call a doctor immediately. I knew a man who had seen a ghost for the first time looked like this, but I already knew the medical doctor was quite useless to solve this problem, so I said to her that there was no need to call the doctor. However, they would not listen to me. So, I was obliged to tell them the story of the ghost lady. Surprisingly, neither of them could stand up for astonishment. At the same time, they wanted to go to the lavatory to see, but they refused to go such an awful place. I was quite at a loss and sorry for telling the story of the ghost lady.

About that time, she looked like she would attack me at last. She suddenly appeared in my room. There was a big noodle-making machine just five meters from my bed of canned food boxes. She was leaning on that machine and turned her head toward me. Now, even as I passed by in front of her, she didn't disappear. I was too fainthearted to try to hit her. So she watched me all through the night. It was very disagreeable. When I thought this situation would continue forever, I was afraid that I really would go mad, and thinking such a thought all through the night, I slept poorly. So I explained this situation to the factory manager, and started to work at night and sleep in the daytime. I could do my job in the night and slept a little better. However, I was now face to face with her all through the night. So I made an effort to communicate with her.

"I'm very sorry I beat you, but it was because of your attitude," I said. But there was

no reply.

“I don’t hate you. On the contrary, I’d like to help you. If you cannot talk, let’s communicate by body language. If you want to say ‘yes’, please stamp the floor one time. ‘No’, twice. Are you ready? Will you answer to my questions by this method?”

But, there was no answer, as I had feared. But it was quite a silly question, for if she didn’t have the will to answer to my questions, she shouldn’t stamp the floor. She was a kind of self-invited guest, but she did nothing, so I decided to ignore her. Whenever I looked up while reading a book, she was still standing there. So I knew the ghost was insatiable.

In April 1947, twelve months had passed since I came to Kamaishi City. I was mentally exhausted from the long struggle with the ghost, so I tried to throw her off the scent. I moved to another unused room, which was located on the second floor of the experimental station. This was a small auditorium, and I made my bedroom space in the corner of this room by placing a single-leaf wooden screen for a partition. I didn’t use the bed made from wooden boxes any more. I had borrowed an iron frame bed. I could see the beautiful mountains and Mt. Goyoh, one of the higher mountains in the Kitakami mountain range, covered with white snow, and it was really beautiful. I left her behind completely. She didn’t notice my moving, so I could enjoy deep sleep for the first time in a long time.

However, after a month, she appeared again, and the situation became worse. She appeared just before the single-leaf wooden screen, which means she stood just beside my bed! I was completely disheartened. When she appeared, she looked down at me. This discouraged me very much. When she stood beside my bed, she didn’t look at me, or, rather, she looked toward me, but she looked into the distance through my body. So if I looked up at her, she didn’t stare at me. So I made up my mind to believe that a kind of doll was standing just beside my bed. This worked well to some degree to get to sleep. I hid myself under the bedclothes and tried not to watch her in any way.

On the night of May 21st, I didn’t know it was her last night in Kamaishi City. I knew something was different about her that night. She was stooping towards me a little bit, but soon I knew the reason, which made me shudder with fear. In the last night, she gazed far in the distance, but today, she looked me in the eye. I screwed up my courage and gazed at her, which gave me a thrill of horror. I lost this staring contest, absolutely feeling more dead than alive. So I hid myself in the bedclothes for about 30 minutes or

so. Then, I put my head out from the bedclothes and found again her cold gaze toward me, which drove me again to hide under the covers. Four or more times I repeated this horrible cycle without sleeping a wink all through the night. The day was beginning to dawn when the ghost lady disappeared.

As soon as the chief of the factory came to the factory, I talked to him about the events of the previous night and told him that I'd like to resign my position at this station and go back to Tokyo. He was very surprised, but knowing something unusual must have happened, he permitted me to go back to Tokyo. He seemed to be afraid that I would be killed by that ghost lady. I left the experimental station alone as quickly as possible because of the danger threatening me and was sent off by this chief and my subordinate at the Kamaishi railroad station. The landscape of the Kitakami highland was very beautiful with white birch trees and the remaining snow, which made my mind happy. The seven-hour ride to Morioka City, where I changed lines to go to Tokyo, was very joyful, and I thought I would never visit Kamaishi City any more. Since then, in Tokyo, I have never met this ghost lady.

Reference [3]

Mt. Kappa (extract)

Shinya Nishimaru
(Originally written in 1974)

When I visit this highland, I make it a rule to pitch my tent on the Gantoh plateau, for there I feel refreshed. A black bear occasionally visits our tent, but we tacitly ignore each other. So, he gives us a glance and goes away.

But, on one occasion, a mysterious man passed by. One early evening, I saw a man impeccably dressed in a mountaineering outfit walking down from the upper stream. He passed just 50 meters from our camp. Strangely enough, he went away without taking any notice of us. We were engaged in putting up the tent, making supper and preparing sleeping places. This place is 2 or 3 days walk from the last bus stop. However, he never gave us a glance. What is more, it was getting darker and darker. It was time that a usual trekker should find a billeting place. Furthermore, this plateau was surrounded by a

large bamboo grove, where was not suitable for camping. I called out him, but he went on and on without looking back. He suddenly vanished from my sight which I thought was strange, so I went after him. But I couldn't find him. It was only one or two minutes since he had vanished. I ran after him as fast as I could. However, I couldn't catch him. I went back to our camp pretending not to have seen anything. However, the other members of this trek knew something strange had happened, and they looked frightened.

After that, we never stayed at that place, so I don't know if this was a supernatural event or an unknown natural phenomenon.

Reference [3]

The valley where I found the victim (extract)

**Shinya Nishimaru
(Originally written in 1974)**

In summer of 1948, I stayed in the Yoko-o stone cave in the Japan Northern Alps for several days. One day, I was staying in this cave, lying in my sleeping bag. I am kind of a lazy fellow, so I had stretched the upper half of my body out of my sleeping bag and was making a fire to prepare my small supper. It was twilight, and I saw a man impeccably dressed in a mountaineering outfit walking down the path from the upper mountain trail. Strangely enough, he went away without taking any notice of me. Everybody knows that Yoko-o stone cave is situated just beside the mountain path, so it was clear that no one would pass by without looking inside the cave. As soon as I saw this strange man pass, I got out of my sleeping bag and ran after him. I ran for 50 or 100 meters, which was enough to catch him, but I couldn't. There was no one in this neighborhood except me.

The next day, I asked another trekker who came from the upper side of the tent camp and the master of the Yoko-o mountain hut, but they only knew that no one had been staying in the upper tent camp for these several days and no one visiting or passing by the hut last evening. Since there were no other trail or short cut in this area, it was impossible to get to the Yoko-o hut by using another mountain trail.

This strange man never passed by the Yoko-o stone cave again, so I couldn't confirm

whether this was a kind of ghost or a natural phenomenon.

Folktales in Toh-no
(Originally published in 1910, by Kunio Yanagida)

No. 82 (**Reference [4]**)

This is also a story told by Mr. Marukichi Tajiri. When he was a boy, one night, he went through the living room of his house to go to the lavatory. He found a strange man standing at the boundary between the living room and the reception room. Something about him looked vague, but Mr. Marukichi Tajiri could discriminate his eye, nose and even the pattern of his clothes. He was shuddered with fear, but he stretched out his hand and tried to touch this man. However, his hand penetrated the body of this strange man and hit the door with a sound. He could touch the knob, but the image of this strange man was still visible, overlapping, and he also noticed that his hand went through his body. He stretched his hand toward the head of this strange man, but his hand also went through the head. He was quite astonished and went back the other room immediately and told his family members about this strange man. When they all went back to that room with a lantern, no one was there. Mr. Marukichi Tajiri is a well-educated, intelligent and honest man. He is not the man to tell a lie.

No. 162 (**Reference [4]**)

Mr. Sho-ichiro Tajiri is a friend of Mr. Sasaki. When he was 7 or 8 years old, he came back home late night from the village shrine with his father. They went through the narrow footpath to the farm and met a man coming from the opposite direction. He had on a hat of woven rush, which was broken and only the frame was left. Mr. Tajiri stopped and tried to yield the way to the man. But this man continued on the path with his foot stepping off the trail and his body leaning toward the field. After this man had gone, Mr. S. Tajirimaru asked his father who that man was. His father answered, "No one passed. I wondered why you suddenly stopped in the middle of path."