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**A Japanese Folktale: The Stonecutter’s Wishes**

Hack! Hack! Hack! The stonecutter was toiling under the burning sun driving his chisel into the stone with his heavy mallet. He led a simple life working as a stonecutter all day and returning to his wife and child in the evening.

On this sweltering day, the stonecutter was feeling particularly grumpy and his mood blackened when he saw his wealthy landlord pass by in a sheltered horse-drawn carriage.

“Oh to be a wealthy man in a cool carriage, never having to do a hard days toil in the hot sun…’ the stonecutter grumbled.

In a flash, the startled stonecutter found himself sitting in a small room. A small room that seemed to be moving! He was bouncing up and down, and up and down. Gripping his seat, he cautiously peered out the window and saw that he was indeed moving in a horse-drawn carriage.

Down below, he saw the stonecutters working in the quarry wearing their dusty grey uniforms. He looked at his own clothes and discovered that he was wearing a magnificent gown embroidered with gold thread. The stonecutter was speechless with wonder he couldn’t believe his luck!

After a while though, he began to feel uncomfortable, sweating under the heavy gown. The heat seemed even more oppressive in the enclosed carriage. The rocking became overwhelming as a sickening wave of nausea struck him.

“What’s the point of being a wealthy man with gold clothes when you can feel as terrible as this?” he asked himself as he yelled for the carriage to stop before tumbling out onto the ground.

As he lay on his back, breathing deeply, he squinted up at the blazing sun. “Oh to be the powerful sun… and not have any worries nor the weak constitution of a man.”

Instantly, the man was no longer a man, but an immaculate orb of light. Being the sun itself, he felt neither hot nor cold. Just powerful. He blazed as hard as he could over the land way below him.

Just as he was beginning to have fun watching streams dry up and the parched ground crack, a large cloud blocked his way.  No matter how hard he shined, the cloud was impenetrable. He felt useless.

“I see now that clouds are more powerful than the sun. I want to be a cloud,” the man commanded becoming used to this strange magic.

A cool, vaporous, spreading feeling washed over him. He was closer to the earth now covering every inch of it in shadow. This pleased him as he thought of the helpless sun above.  He looked at the parched land below and decided to have a bit of fun. A thunderstorm! He started to drizzle, then rain, then launched into a fabulous downpour. For a touch of theatrics, he flashed with lightning and boomed with thunder. He aimed his bolts at trees, which split dramatically down the middle.

Then he aimed at the rock on which he had toiled as a man but the effect was disappointing. A few tiny pieces broke off the surface, but the rock was otherwise unscathed.

“Obviously rock is more powerful than cloud,” he said laughing to himself. He couldn’t believe that he had thought that he’d be most powerful as a soft fluffy cloud.

“Time to become rock!” he ordered.

Suddenly he felt very still and solid. He tried to move, but he was absolutely stuck. A sharp stinging sensation, chipped away at him.

Hack! Hack! Hack! It was a stonecutter driving his chisel into him with his heavy mallet!

It suddenly dawned on him; he didn’t want to be a landlord in a carriage, nor the sun or cloud or rock. He didn’t need such power. He just wanted to be himself, the humble stonecutter, to go home every evening to his wife and child.

“Please… I’d like to be myself again.”

And in a flash, he was old self, with his chisel in one hand and his mallet in the other.