

THE TEAPOT BADGER

A Japanese tale

Adapted by Carole L. Cooney

Setting: Poor old man, Hiroshi's, house

Characters:

Japanese names.....Meaning

Narrator

Hiroshi, the old man Generous

Toyo, the badger Plentiful

Cho, a girl Butterfly

Hoshi, a boy Star

Raidon, a boy Thunder god

Kameko, a girl Tortoise child

Narrator: In a small Japanese village, there lived a poor old man named Hiroshi. He was a kind person who loved to tell stories to children. Whenever children visited Hiroshi, they knew they would receive a treat from his garden. One day, Hiroshi was standing in his doorway.

Hiroshi: What a beautiful day! The sun warms my old bones and makes me feel young again. Such a perfect day to tell a story to the children!

Toyo: (peeking through the bushes, purring) I love to see the children sitting at Hiroshi's feet while he tells a tale. He is such a fine old man, I think it's time for him to receive a reward.

Narrator: As Hiroshi walked to the edge of his garden, Toyo, the badger, crept into the house, jumped onto the table and turned himself into a teapot. This would be a great reward since Hiroshi was so poor, he could not afford a teapot or tea. As he walked through his garden he thought.

Hiroshi: How I'd love to have a nice teapot with hot tea. Oh, that would taste so good. Ah, but I am poor and I must not wish for things I know I can not have. Now, it is time to get things ready for the children.

Narrator: When Hiroshi stepped through the doorway, he was surprised to see a teapot in the center of his table.

Hiroshi: What is that? A teapot? (taking off the lid) And... it is full of hot tea!

Narrator: Quickly, Hiroshi ran to the cupboard to get his one cup. His hand was shaking as he poured because he was so excited.

Hiroshi: (filling his cup) This teapot filled with tea brings tears to my eyes. Yes, tears of joy! Ah... this tea is the best tea in the whole world!

Narrator: No matter how much tea Hiroshi drank, the teapot was always full. That evening, the children came to Hiroshi's garden.

Cho: (clapping her hands) Please, oh please, tell us one of your wonderful stories!

Kameko: I liked the last one you told us about the frog. Tell us another.

Raidon: (to Hoshi) Well, I hope *this one* is better than the last one. I thought it was too silly. You know what I mean?

Hoshi: Come on, old man. Get started!

Hiroshi: I will tell you a most wonderful story and it is true. This morning, when I returned to my house from the garden, I found this teapot on the table. How it got there I do not know. I took off its lid and it was full of the most delicious tea. I have been drinking tea all day and it is always full.

Raidon: You say this is *true*?

Cho: (fluttering her hands) How, oh how can that be?

Hoshi: Do you believe it, Kameko?

Kameko: I'm not sure.

Hiroshi: Sit quietly children, while I go into the garden and pick some fruit for you.

Narrator: While Hiroshi was gone, the children stood and walked to the table. Just as Raidon reached out to take the teapot, it turned into a badger!

Toyo: (barking and growling) You cannot treat kind Hiroshi that way! How does that bite feel on your feet? (hissing) Run faster you little monsters!

Narrator: Toyo chased the screaming children out the door. He then turned, hopped on the table and turned into the teapot.

Hiroshi: What happened to make you scream, children?

Kameko: Your teapot is really a Badger! He chased us and bit my heel. Look here!

Hiroshi: I only see a little scratch on your foot. Come back in the house, children. Look at the teapot. It is just where I left it. You children must have been dreaming. Now sit quietly while I pick some delicious pears for you.

Narrator: The children crept to the fireplace and grabbed some sticks. They began to beat the teapot.

Toyo: Never, never mistreat me!

Narrator: Once again the teapot turned into a badger. He leapt off the table and chased the screaming children around the room, nipping at their feet. There was so much noise, Hiroshi ran back into the house. Seeing the badger, he grabbed a stick. Hiroshi was ready to hit the badger, when suddenly he stopped.

Toyo: Never beat me, never mistreat me! Dear old man Hiroshi, these children were trying to steal your teapot and so I turned into a badger to protect it. They are not worthy of you and your wonderful stories nor your gifts of fruit.

Hiroshi: Is this true, children?

All the children: (sadly) Yes.

Hiroshi: Then you must go home.

Narrator: The children slowly walked down the road with red faces of shame.

Toyo: Dear old man Hiroshi, I have an idea! Let us travel together and put on a magic show. We'll call it Toyo's Magic Show. You will show me as a teapot and then I'll change into a Badger and then back into a teapot. People will pay many gold coins to see our wonderful show!

Narrator: Toyo's Magic Show made Hiroshi rich. After many years, he returned home and put the teapot in a little temple in his garden. It was greatly honored, especially by those who once had tried to steal it.