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IMAGINATION OVER KNOWLEDGE

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Schippeitaro

In Japan, it used to be common for a boy, upon reaching adulthood, to leave his parental home and embark on adventures. Sometimes a boy would encounter another boy who was engaged in the same pursuit. It was customary for them to fight each other in a friendly manner, as young warriors, to prove who was the strongest. But sometimes the opponent had evil intentions. Then the fight could be deadly dangerous. One day, a young warrior left his hometown in search of adventure. He roamed for a long time until he saw a high mountain in the distance and felt he should go and take a look. The road there was difficult. He had to cross large rivers and climb enormous rocks. But the boy did not mind, as he felt very brave. At one point, he became lost in a large, magical forest. No matter which path he chose, he kept returning to the same place: a small church.

Exhausted from wandering in the forest, the boy decided to sleep there. It was quiet in the forest. But at midnight, the boy woke up to a deafening noise. He cautiously looked outside through the wooden pillars of the church and saw some terrible cats wildly dancing and making hideous screams. The boy held his breath, as it would not be good if the cats saw him. He thought he heard them say amid the shouting: "Do not tell Schippeitaro! Keep it hidden and secret! Do not tell

Schippeitaro!" An hour later, they were all gone, and the boy fell back asleep. The next morning, he woke up feeling very hungry. So, he quickly went out to look for food. He walked down a side path and saw human footprints. He followed the footprints in hopes of finding something where he could get food. The path



led to a place where several huts were standing. Behind the huts was a village. The boy was about to hurry to the village when he heard a woman's voice from one of the huts. She was crying and begging the men to have pity on her and help her. The sound of her distress made him forget his hunger, and he rushed into the hut. He asked the men what was

going on. The men said that all this sorrow was caused by the Spirit of the Mountain, to whom they were obligated to sacrifice a girl from the village every year. "Tonight, the monster will come to eat the girl. The girl you heard is the one who will be sacrificed," the men said. She would be tied up in a sacrificial box and taken to the church in the forest.

The boy was filled with a great desire to save the girl from her terrible fate. The church must have been the one where he had spent the night. He thought and remembered what he had heard the cats say. "Who is Schippeitaro?" he asked the men.

"Schippeitaro is the big dog that belongs to the supervisor of our prince," one of the men said. "He does

not live far away." They started laughing at the question, which seemed so strange and useless to them. The boy did not laugh, but left the hut and went straight to the supervisor's house. He begged the man if he could borrow the dog for one night. The supervisor refused at first, but eventually gave in and let him take the dog. The boy promised to return the dog the next day. He then went to the hut where the girl lived and begged the parents to safely lock her up somewhere. He then put Schippeitaro in the box and brought it to the church. There he hid until the Spirit of the Mountain would appear. At midnight, when the full moon appeared above the top of the mountain, the cats appeared in the church and began to dance, filling the sacred building with screams and shouts. In the middle was an enormous black cat that seemed to be their king. The boy suspected that this was the Spirit of the Mountain. The monster looked greedily around and its eyes sparkled when it saw the box. It jumped high in the air with delight. It approached the box and opened the lid. But instead of sinking its teeth into the neck of a beautiful maiden, Schippeitaro sank its teeth into the cat, and the boy killed it with his sword. The other cats were so shocked by the turn of events that they forgot to run away. The boy and the dog killed a few more before they remembered to flee. At sunrise, the brave dog was returned to its owner, and from that moment on, all the girls in the village were safe. Even to this day, a festival is held here every year in memory of the young warrior and the dog Schippeitaro.