

Rabbit and Tortoise *usagi to kame*

A tortoise was having a nap beside the pond as always. The tortoise yawned and saw a rabbit passing nearby him. He felt like teasing the rabbit. The tortoise said, "Hey, rabbit, you look busy. Let's race to the top of the mountain." The rabbit replied, "I'm too busy, today. We can race next time." The tortoise said, "No way. You are about to run away." The tortoise pointed out that the rabbit lost his race with other tortoise the other day.

The rabbit got a bit angry, and accepted the tortoise's challenge.

Many lilies were blooming on the mountain. The one who reach the top of the mountain first was promised to pick one of the lilies as a proof of winner. The rabbit firmly determined to win this match for the sake of his ancestors, and he immediately started to run.

The tortoise thought the rabbit will be having a nap somewhere as before. While the tortoise was started to feel tired of running up to the mountain, a fox passed nearby him. The tortoise greeted the fox, "Hello, Mr. Fox. You have a lovely tail." The cunning fox felt not bad about the tortoise's words, and replied, "Not every fox has a tail of this level." The tortoise praised the fox further, "Not only beautiful, but strong." The fox felt good, and said "Of course, my tail is extremely strong." The tortoise asked, "Then if I hold on to your tail, can you bring me up to the mountain only by your tail?" The fox proudly replied, "No problem at all" The tortoise hold on to the fox's tail, and the fox swiftly started to run. The fox kept on running without any care to the tortoise. The tortoise finally covered with wounds and cracks on his shell, rolled down the mountain slope to the pond.

The rabbit, on the other hand, had already succeeded to return to the pond with a lily in his hand. The rabbit confirmed, "Let us see which of us returned faster to the pond." The tortoise felt embarrassed of the result. From then on, the tortoise began to put its hands and legs in its shell.

[Kobayashi Tsunayoshi, *Kawasaki-no Minwa to Densetsu* (The Folktales and Legends of Kawasaki), 2 vols, vol.2, 1970, p. 21.]