



STORY: THE MAGIC TEAKETTLE

A Japanese Folktale Retold by Dianne de Las Casas

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There was once a priest who loved to drink tea. One day, in an old secondhand shop, he found a lovely iron tea kettle. He brought it home and polished it. He put water into the kettle and placed it over the fire. “I can’t wait to drink my tea,” said the priest.

The fire blazed and the kettle became hotter and hotter and hotter until suddenly, a very odd thing happened. The kettle grew the head of a badger, four badger feet, and a big bushy badger tail.

The badger teakettle hopped off the fire and danced around. “Ooh, ooh, ooh, that is hot, hot, hot!” He began running out the door.

The old priest ran after him and caught the badger teakettle. As soon as he picked it up, it turned back into a regular iron teakettle. The priest said, “You must be a bewitched teakettle. I cannot have that kind of mischief in my temple.”

So the priest found a junkman and sold the teakettle for a very small price. The junkman was pleased to have found such a bargain. He brought the teakettle home, polished it and placed it in the middle of the table.

The kettle grew the head of a badger, four badger feet, and a big bushy badger tail. It spoke to the junkman, “Hello.”

The junkman was startled. “Oh my goodness. Not only have you grown a head, legs and a tail, but you can also talk!”

The badger teakettle said, “That’s right. I am no ordinary teakettle. My name is Bumbuku, which means ‘Good Luck.’ The priest put me over a fire and burned me so I tried to run away from him. If you treat me kindly, feed me rice cakes, and promise never to put me over a fire, I will make you a very rich man.”

The junkman said, “I promise. But how will you do that?”

Bumbuku answered, “I can do all sorts of tricks and people will pay to see me perform!”

Bumbuku was right. People from all over the land paid to see ‘Bumbuku, the Magic Teakettle of Good Luck’ perform. He balanced on a tight rope while fanning himself with one hand and eating rice cakes with the other. The people cheered and cheered for Bumbuku.

Bumbuku and the old junkman became good friends. As Bumbuku promised, the junkman became rich. One day, the junkman said, “Bumbuku, you have been so good to me. You must

tire of doing these tricks every day. I have all I need now. Perhaps you should return to the temple and live the rest of your days peacefully.”

Bumbuku cried out, “No, don’t take me back there. The mean priest will burn me alive if he puts me over the fire!”

The junkman said, “Bumbuku, I will take care of everything. You will have no worries for the rest of your life.”

The junkman went to the temple and told his story to the priest. The priest said, “If I had known Bumbuku was a magic teakettle of good luck, I would never have placed him over the fire. He is welcome to stay at the temple for as long as he likes.”

So Bumbuku and the old junkman bid each other farewell. Bumbuku stayed at the temple. They never placed Bumbuku over the fire and they fed him his favorite food – rice cakes. The old junkman often visited Bumbuku and Bumbuku lived the rest of his days peacefully.

