

Noppera-Bō

Japan

MANY YEARS AGO, there was a fisherman who lived in a small village on the edge of a deep forest. The fisherman had been fishing in his village’s pond for years, but was getting tired of it. He had heard there was another pond on the other side of the woods, and one day decided to go out and try it.

“Please don’t,” his wife pleaded with him. “On the other side of the pond is an old graveyard, and people in town have told me that strange forces rule the forest around it.”

“Oh, that’s silly,” the fisherman said. “I could use the change of scenery, anyway.” Ignoring his wife’s warning, he picked up his fishing gear and set off for the forest.

He walked for an hour or two. On his way there, he ran across a man on his way into town. Seeing the fisherman’s fishing pole, the stranger slowed. “Say... are you on your way to the pond in the woods?”

“I am,” the fisherman replied.

“I’d turn around if I were you,” the other fisherman said. “Strange things have been known to happen there. Not everyone who goes there comes home.”

The fisherman shrugged. “Oh, that’s just a myth. I’ll be fine.”

He walked a little while longer until he finally found the pond. It was beautiful: clear, sparkling water surrounded by tall trees on all sides. A cool mist crept in over the tops of the trees.

He settled down on a rock and began to fish. After a few minutes, he heard a strange rustling sound behind him. He thought it was just the wind. Then, he heard it again – louder this time. He got up to see what it was.

As he went to stand up, he noticed a young woman a few feet away, standing with her back to him. She looked sad. “What’s the matter?” he said as he approached her.

“This pond is sacred,” she said softly. “You must leave at once.”

“Not this again,” said the fisherman, who was becoming a little frustrated. “I can’t believe all of you are so gullible –”

“Listen to me,” she said sternly. “This pond has been cursed. You must leave right now.”

“No. I came here to fish, and fish I shall.” He started

to turn back to the pond, when he felt a hand on his shoulder. He could feel the woman leaning close to him; her soft breath on his neck. He began to feel scared. As he turned around to look, he saw: the woman had no face!

Instantly, he was terrified. He gathered his things and went home, running all the way.

It was evening when he arrived. He burst through the door, calling for his wife. “You will never believe what I saw! Oh, it was just horrible!”

“See, I told you not to go there,” his wife said. He could see her standing in the other room, her back turned to him. He began to get nervous.

“Wife... why are you turned away like that?”

She slowly turned around to reveal...



What did the fisherman see when the wife turned around?

Write your own ending to the story on the lines below.
