

## The Bow and Arrow



I HAVE received one thousand coins and a bamboo container.

It is the power of the bow that determines the flight of the arrow, the might of the dragon that controls the movement of the clouds, and the strength of the wife that guides the actions of her husband. In the same way, it is your support that has enabled Toki to visit me here now. We know the fire by its smoke, discern the nature of the dragon by the rain, and recognize the wife by observing her husband. Thus, meeting here at this moment with Toki, I feel as if I were seeing you.

Toki has told me that, while grieved at his mother's death, he was grateful that she passed away peacefully, and that you gave her such attentive care. He said joyfully that he would never be able to forget this in any lifetime to come.

My greatest concern now is your illness. Fully convinced that you will recover your health, you should continue moxibustion treatment for three years, as regularly as if you had just begun. Even those who are free from illness cannot escape the transience of life, but you are not yet old, and because you are a votary of the Lotus Sutra, you will not meet an untimely death. Your illness is surely not due to karma, but even if it were, you could

rely on the power of the Lotus Sutra to cure it.

King Ajatashatru extended his life by forty years by embracing the Lotus Sutra. Ch'en Chen added fifteen years to his life. You also are a practitioner of the Lotus Sutra, and your faith is like the waxing moon or the rising tide. Be deeply convinced, then, that your illness cannot possibly persist, and that your life cannot fail to be extended! Take care of yourself, and do not burden your mind with grief.

When sorrows arise, think of Iki and Tsushima, and of the Dazaifu office.<sup>1</sup> Or think of the people of Kamakura, who were enjoying the delights of the heavenly realm; but when the soldiers left for Tsukushi, their parting with their wives and children who stayed behind was like bark being ripped from a tree. They pressed their faces together and lamented while gazing into each other's eyes. Now the men gradually grow more distant, traveling through Yui Beach, Inamura, Koshigoe, Sakawa, and the Hakone pass. And so, as one day passes and then another goes by, they march farther and farther away, and rivers, mountains, and clouds are interposed between them and their families. Tears accompany them, and grief is their companion. How sorrowful they must be!

If the Mongol armies should come

and attack while they are thus lamenting, they will be taken prisoner, whether in the mountains or on the sea, and will suffer misery in ships or in Koryō [Korea]. This is entirely because of the treatment people have accorded Nichiren, the votary of the Lotus Sutra, who has committed no fault and is father and mother to all the living beings of Japan. Without reason, they revile and beat him, and parade him through the streets. Such insanity has provoked reprimands from the ten demon daughters, causing the present situation to arise. In addition, events that are a hundred, thousand, ten thousand, million times more difficult to endure will occur in the future. You will see such mysteries unfold before your eyes.

There is nothing to lament when we consider that we will surely become Buddhas. Even if one were to become an emperor's consort, of what use would it be? Even if one were to be reborn in heaven, what end would it serve? Instead, you will follow the way of the dragon king's daughter and rank with the nun Mahaprajapati. How wonderful! How wonderful! Please chant Nam-myoho-rence-kyo, Nam-myoho-rence-kyo.

With my deep respect,  
Nichiren

The twenty-seventh day of the third month

To the lay nun Toki



## Background

Nichiren Daishonin wrote this letter to the lay nun Toki in the third month of the second year of Kenji (1276) and entrusted its delivery to her husband, Toki Jonin, who was visiting Minobu at the time.

Toki's mother had passed away toward the end of the second month of the year. In the third month, Toki carried her ashes from his home in Wakamiya, Shimosa Province, to distant Minobu, where a memorial service was performed for her. From a letter the Daishonin sent to Toki one year earlier, in 1275, it is clear that Toki's mother was over ninety years old when she died. It is also thought that she had been extremely fond of her son.

The contents of this letter suggest that the lay nun Toki did her best to support and assist her husband. In addition, the Daishonin likens her faith to "the waxing moon or the rising

tide," suggesting that she was diligent in her practice. He also conveys Toki's feelings regarding his mother's death as well as his sense of gratitude toward the lay nun for her attentive care of her mother-in-law. Thus the Daishonin compassionately encourages the lay nun Toki during her illness, which she had been battling since the previous year.

It is possible that her illness was due at least in part to the exhausting effort of caring for her mother-in-law. The Daishonin expresses concern over her health in this letter and in another letter sent to Toki Jonin in the eleventh month of 1276, in which he writes: "I think of your wife's illness as if it were my own, and am praying to heaven day and night." Although the year of the lay nun's death is not certain, one source indicates 1303, which suggests that she was indeed able to recover and live many years longer.

**Note**

1. Iki and Tsushima are islands off the coast of Kyushu in southern Japan that bore the brunt of the Mongol attack in 1274. The Dazaifu office was the administrative center for Kyushu, Iki, and Tsushima, and served as a foreign affairs conduit and as a rallying point in the case of foreign in-

vasion. During the attack of 1274, it was a focal point of defense against the Mongols. Even after the attack had ended, many warriors were sent to Tsukushi, or Kyushu, from throughout the country to guard against a second attack.

