

Strand 1 – Supporting Resources

Orion Story Book

Orion the Hunter

By Eryn Makinson

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Based on one of the Greek versions of the story.

When he came, the people lined the city streets hoping to catch a glimpse of the mighty hunter as he strode past. At last a shout went up “there he is” and all necks craned in the same direction as the man himself came into view. He was a sight worth seeing this hunter, sired by a god; beloved of a goddess; the sun dancing across his jewelled belt and down the blade of his naked sword; gleaming on muscles of shoulder, legs and neck. Huge he was, and fearsome, with a lion skin dragging from one hand and a club solid as a tree trunk in the other. Certainly there was none in the city brave enough to challenge him. As he passed the cheers rose up “Orion! Orion!” and the women jostled each other to get closer, for it isn’t every day a genuine hero comes to town.

That night there were feasts of course, in his honour, with much wine passed and drunk; too much wine! Because while the heads of weaker men dropped down into sleep Orion pushed aside the table and rose, swaying and staggering to bellow: “I am Orion the hunter, best in the world,

best there is. Show me an animal and I’ll kill it.”

Then amid the cheering he shouted: “I’ll kill them all, every animal in the world. I’ll... kill... them... all. ... I...am...” Then he toppled as a tree might, crash, to the floor, to spend the rest of the night in a snoring stupor.

Alas for Orion, when he awoke it was not to the adulation of men and the remnants of the previous night’s feast. Instead he woke to a vast blue sky, dizzying in its intensity, a strange meadow all around, and no idea how he came to be there. The sixth sense of a hunter, which never sleeps, was hammering danger, danger, danger in his ear. Indeed the very air itself was straining at his nerve ends – danger, danger. Even the grass seemed to whisper: “Beware Orion, mighty hunter, the animals come.”

At last his drunken words “I’ll kill them all” came rushing back to Orion, and he stood club in one hand, sword in the other, muscles tense, eyes sweeping first one way, then another. Nothing to be seen except meadow grass and meadow flowers, rippling gently in the breeze. Yet now through the very earth he stood on, he felt the voice of Gaia, Earth Goddess, thrumming in anger at the threat to her animal children.

Sweat poured down Orion’s back as his invisible doom stalked closer and still closer. Then just as his nerves shrieked,

a tiny movement by his big toe jerked his eyes downward. There, its tail curved in the act of striking, was a large scorpion. With a howl Orion leapt backwards, swinging his club futilely through the air. There was nothing to be seen except meadow grass and meadow flowers, rippling gently in the breeze, and a calling through the soles of his feet: "We will kill you, Orion."

With a cry, Orion, mighty hunter, turned and fled, across the day and into the night, ever to be followed by Scorpion, tail poised for the strike.

Take no Fushi

By Chris Hilder

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Based on a story outline in Renshaw, S and Saori Ihara *Yowatashi Boshi; Stars that Pass in the Night* 1999 (Internet publication) URL: <http://www2.gol.com/users/steve/orion.htm> Accessed: 21/11/2002

Far away, in the countryside of old Japan, following a hard-packed sand path through rice fields, were two sisters. The elder sister walked proudly in front; the younger followed behind carrying two heavy tubs of water on a bamboo pole over her shoulder. Not a word passed between them as they strode through the silent fields. A tall stand of bamboo loomed in the twilight and into the darkness of this leafy forest the older girl strode without faltering.

Her sister was frightened by the dark bamboo forest and feared that night would fall before they emerged from the other side. But she did not for a moment consider turning aside from the path and

dutifully followed her sister step for step carrying the precious water home for the family.

No sooner had they entered the gloom than a hideous cry punctured the late afternoon stillness and behind the two young women there appeared a hideous ogre. He stood fully three times as tall as the taller girl, his eyes glowed like beacons, and his teeth flashed in his cruel mouth. "Ahhhhhhhh!" screamed the two as they ran pell mell down the path that led deeper and deeper into the bamboo. A kimono fluttered and slapped around the knees of each girl as they ran. Water from the tubs sloshed and splashed over the younger girl, but she did not abandon her burden.

The ogre pounded along swiftly and the sisters' fate seemed sealed, when they came upon a rope hanging from the sky. The older girl, now well in front of her sister, grabbed the rope and clambered up it like a flash.

The younger sister, slowed by her tubs of water, reached the rope just as the ogre was upon her. She flew up the rope, quickly, almost quicker than the eye can follow. The ogre lunged blindly. He grabbed her left foot, but she continued to clamber upwards until only her foot hung down in the vice-like grip of the ogre. Emitting a hideous cry, the ogre bit the foot off - crunch - and the young woman continued on her way to meet up with her sister in the sky.

She can still be seen on long winter evenings as, even today she carries her two tubs of water following her sister the moon around the sky. Her bamboo pole, and her one remaining foot can be clearly seen during the cold winter nights. She did not escape the onset of the night, but she did escape the ogre and went on to have a bright future.

Tautoru the Bird-hunter

By A W Reed

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Of all the bird-hunters of old, the most renowned was Tautoru. He was young and handsome and skilled in all the arts of hunting. The snares which he made and decorated with bright berries and scented flowers attracted flocks of birds from a great distance. The plump wood-pigeons alighted, unaware of the cunningly concealed nooses that were hidden beneath the foliage, and there they met their death. To the snare came kakas and tuis, and birds which were seldom seen and never caught, even the elusive kotuku and the kakakura. It is said that as many birds were caught in a single day as twenty young men could carry. Kiwis, wekas, and kakapos, the ground birds of the forest, were not safe from him, because he trained dogs to hunt them.

Tautoru did not depend wholly on his skill, but was also constant in the rituals and karakias recited to Tane, the lord of the forest. He was admired by his fellow-tribesmen, and even won the love of Rauroha, who was the foremost of the spirits of the air. She descended each night and stayed with him till dawn, sharing his love, but ever hiding her face from him. Tautoru longed to see the woman he loved and, by violating the tapu that surrounded her, he succeeded in looking at her in the first light of dawn.

But alas, Rauroha could no longer live with him. Knowing that he had lost her for

ever, Tautoru went sorrowfully into the forest. He climbed a tall tree and set his snare in the branches, but he had no heart for his task. Placing his foot carelessly, he slipped and fell to the ground, breaking his neck.

There was no one to see him except his lost wife. Looking down from the heavens, she was puzzled to see a countless host of birds wheeling and crying round one of the forest trees. She descended and found her husband lying quiet in death at the foot of the tree. She wept over him, and sent a message to his relatives to tell them of the young man's death. They carried him home on a stretcher in a sitting position, clad in his finest robes.

On the journey a mysterious thing happened. Suddenly the bearers found that their load was lightened, for Tautoru's body disappeared. When they returned home with the empty stretcher, the tohungas explained that Tane, the first bird-snarer, must have taken him up to the sky because of his great exploits on earth. He has remained there ever since as a constellation of stars. The Pakeha calls it Orion, but to the Maori it is Tautoru, who forever spears pigeons in the star-spangled skies. The cluster of flowers and the snare itself are traced in the constellation; and, if one looks closely, myriads of tiny pigeons can be seen winging towards the snare.

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| <i>kākā</i> | parrot |
| <i>kākākura</i> | red breasted parrot |
| <i>kākāpō</i> | ground parrot |
| <i>karakia</i> | incantation, prayer |
| <i>kiwi</i> | wingless bird of genus Apteryx |
| <i>kōtuku</i> | white heron |
| <i>Māori</i> | person of New Zealand Māori descent |
| <i>Pākehā</i> | person of European descent |
| <i>tapu</i> | religious restriction |
| <i>tohunga</i> | priest |
| <i>tui</i> | parson bird |
| <i>weka</i> | woodhen |