

Before the Wind

by

Carlo Schefter

EXT. FOREST - DAY

Japan. 1600s. A young MONK clothed in a white robe hikes down a snowy path in the forest.

A sound of a branch snapping up ahead causes him to stop and look up.

A black-clad BANDIT steps from behind a tree, blocking the way. He leans against the tree trunk with a casual demeanor, resting his hands on the hilt of his sword.

BANDIT

You are trespassing in my woods,
stranger. There is a fee for
travelling further.

MONK

Sir, I am but a poor monk, who's
life has been given to austerity.
Please let me pass.

The bandit strokes his beard and looks the monk over thoughtfully. The monk continues,

MONK (CONT'D)

I'm afraid I do not own anything
except these clothes... for I am
journeying to Edo to beg for alms.

The bandit frowns.

MONK (CONT'D)

But do not be troubled. The one
who smiles, rather than frowns, is
always the stronger.

The bandit blinks...

Then bursts into hearty laughter.

He sits down and slaps his knee and points at the monk.

BANDIT

Alright then, wise monk, I propose
this: teach me truthfully about
how to live and I will let you go
on.

The monk smiles.

MONK

Well, if I must, then I shall! The
tenets by which to live are such:

The monk holds up a finger.

MONK (CONT'D)
Hard work is the inescapable
condition of life.

CUT TO:

INT./EXT. TEMPLE - DAY

A shot of the monk scrubbing floors.

A shot of the monk sweeping the temple courtyard.

A shot of monk carrying water in a pale.

CUT TO:

EXT. FOREST - DAY

MONK
A day of no work is a day of no
eating.

The bandit looks unimpressed.

The monk holds up a second finger.

MONK (CONT'D)
Patience is the greatest prayer.

CUT TO:

INT. TEMPLE - DAY

The monk meditates solemnly with eyes closed.

CUT TO:

EXT. FOREST - DAY

MONK
For patience will pierce even a
stone.

The bandit considers this. The monk holds up a third
finger.

MONK (CONT'D)
And loyalty; loyalty is the
highest virtue.

3.

CUT TO:

INT. TEMPLE - DAY

The monk bows before a gold buddha relic.

CUT TO:

EXT. FOREST - DAY

MONK

A loyal subject does not serve two
lords.

Finished, the monk closes his eyes peacefully and bows his
head.

MONK (CONT'D)

And that is how one ought to live.

The bandit claps his hands together, laughs and jumps up.

BANDIT

Well let me say, o wise monk, how
I would live if I were you!

The monk is startled and doesn't know what to say. The
bandit moves closer and raises his index finger.

BANDIT (CONT'D)

I would be lazy.

CUT TO:

INT./EXT. TEMPLE - DAY

Floors unscubbed.

Broom leaning against a wall.

Water pale empty in the grass.

The bandit dressed as the monk sleeping in the sun.

CUT TO:

EXT. FOREST - DAY

The bandit mockingly wags his finger.

BANDIT
Time spent laughing is time spent
with the gods.

The monk looks down, embarrassed.

The bandit obnoxiously ambles closer.

BANDIT (CONT'D)
I would be impatient.

CUT TO:

INT. TEMPLE - DAY

The bandit dressed as the monk tries to meditate but then sneaks his eyes open and looks around. He closes them again, but burps and bursts into laughter.

CUT TO:

EXT. FOREST - DAY

BANDIT
(sing-songy) For each day is like
a thousand autumns.

The monk is dismayed and uneasy. He fidgets. The bandit leans closer.

BANDIT (CONT'D)
And, let me tell you, I would be a
disloyal *spider*.

CUT TO:

INT. TEMPLE - DAY

The bandit dressed as the monk looks around slyly, then grabs the holy relic and exits.

CUT TO:

EXT. FOREST - DAY

BANDIT
For a man's heart changes like the
clouds in the sky.

The monk is very worried now. The bandit steps right up in front of him and sneers in his face.

BANDIT (CONT'D)
 ...and great villainy is often
 called loyalty!

The monk stumbles backwards and turns to go.

The bandit is before him suddenly and grabs him by the collar. He reaches into the monk's robe and procures the holy relic that the man had in fact stolen.

BANDIT (CONT'D)
 A poor monk indeed!

The flustered monk produces a tanto blade and violently stabs the bandit in the belly.

A cold wind blows across the forest path.

The monk has a horrified look on his face. His eyes get as wide as can be.

The camera tracks around him to see that the bandit has been revealed to be a *ghost-demon*, with a distorted face, horns and flowing white hair. The demon seems to grow in stature before him.

DEMON
 You presumptuous insect! Only the
 pure of heart may tread my forest
 unmolested! Let alone a liar; a
 thief; a murderer!

The monk swallows hard and shrinks back. The demon slides toward him slowly as if floating.

DEMON (CONT'D)
 But I shall do you a service, and
 allow you to redeem your folly!

The monk looks down to see that the blade he used to stab the bandit is now buried in his abdomen, held by his own hand. The pain hits him and he falls to his knees in speechless, sputtering agony.

DEMON (CONT'D)
 Finish seppuku by your own hand
 and the King of the Dead may yet
 be merciful! DO IT NOW!

The demon steps to the side and draws his sword.

DEMON (CONT'D)
I will be your second!

The demon raises his sword over the monk's neck.

DEMON (CONT'D)
I promise you a clean
decapitation.

The monk panics and pulls the blade out of his belly and throws it to the ground. He gets up and runs in an attempt to escape. He gets only a couple yards before he collapses and dies.

The demon grunts and sheaths his sword disdainfully.

The demon turns, and walks into the distance.

DEMON (CONT'D)
(singing in noh style) The proud
ones do not last long, but vanish
like a dream.

The demon fades away.

DEMON (CONT'D)
And the mighty ones too will
perish like dust before the
wind...

END.