

The White Butterfly

Long ago, there lived in Japan an old man named Takahama. The man had built a humble, small house near the old cemetery, high on a hill, and had lived there for many years, ever since his youth.

Takahama was a very kind and generous man, and all the residents held him in high regard. However, they were surprised that he had never married and had preferred to live alone up there.

One very hot summer, the old man fell ill, and his sister and his nephew, Akasuki and Eiko, who loved him very much, came to care for him.

Takahama told them:

"I think my life is nearing its end..."

The two told him not to worry, that they would always be with him and care for him for as long as he needed it.

Takahama's nephew never left his side. And one sunny and very hot morning, a white butterfly flew into the old man's room. Eiko tried to scare it away, but the butterfly kept coming back. Finally, the boy gave up and let it flutter beside the old man, admiring the beauty of its wings. Until the butterfly decided to leave the room, and the boy, filled with curiosity, followed it.

The small white butterfly entered the old cemetery and flew to a grave, where it began to flutter until it disappeared. The grave looked quite old, but it had no moss or grass, instead it was very clean and surrounded by beautiful, well-tended white flowers.

The young man, amazed by what he had just seen, returned to Takahama's room and discovered that he had just died.

Takahama's nephew ran to find his mother to give her the news and told her what he had just seen. His mother, far from being surprised, smiled and said:

"I can now reveal Takahama's secret, I suppose... When he was young, your uncle fell in love with a girl named Akiko. They decided to get married, but days before the wedding, she died, and your uncle fell into a deep sadness. When he recovered, he decided he would never marry again, and he built this house next to the cemetery to visit and care for his beloved's grave every day."

The young man reflected and understood who the butterfly was, and that now his uncle Takahama had finally been reunited with his beloved Akiko.