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Old Jack's Ghost Stories from Japan sample  
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## **OLD JACK'S GHOST STORIES FROM JAPAN**

Level 3 - A2/B1 Intermediate (1) Graded Reader from I Talk You Talk Press

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Old Jack's Ghost Stories from Japan  
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### **Message from Old Jack**

Hello, and welcome to my book of Japanese ghost stories. A few years ago, I visited Ireland to do some research for my book Old Jack's Ghost Stories from Ireland. One evening, I was sitting in the hotel bar, when I met Mr Yamada, a Japanese tourist. He was sitting at the table next to mine. We started talking. Mr Yamada had travelled to Ireland for an interesting reason. He wanted to visit the childhood home of the writer Lafcadio Hearn.

Lafcadio Hearn was born in 1850 and died in 1904. He travelled to Japan, and lived in Matsue, Mr Yamada's hometown, for about a year. There, he married the daughter of a samurai. They had four children, and Lafcadio spent the rest of his life in Japan.

I was interested to hear Mr Yamada's story about Lafcadio Hearn, but I was even more interested when he told me that Lafcadio Hearn researched and collected Japanese ghost stories! Mr Yamada and I talked for a long time. He told me about his hometown. He said, "Lafcadio Hearn's house is still there. Now, it is a popular tourist spot. You should visit Matsue. You can stay with me! I will tell you Hearn's ghost stories, and take you sightseeing!"

Mr Yamada and I exchanged addresses, and we wrote to each other regularly. Then, last year, in the autumn, when the leaves were turning red and orange, I decided to visit Mr Yamada and learn about Japanese ghosts.

So, come and join me on my great adventure in the wonderful country of Japan and enjoy the mysterious world of Lafcadio Hearn's Japanese ghost stories.

### **1. A Mother's Love**

#### **Place: Daio-ji Temple, Matsue City, Shimane Prefecture**

I arrived in Matsue in the early afternoon. Mr Yamada and his wife were waiting for me. We shook hands.

"It's good to see you again Old Jack san! Welcome to my hometown!" said Mr Yamada.

"It's wonderful to see you too!" I said.

"It's nice to meet you," said Mrs Yamada.

"It's nice to meet you too, Mrs Yamada," I said.

"What should I call you?" she asked.

"Call me Old Jack," I said. "Everybody calls me Old Jack."

They took me to their home, a beautiful traditional Japanese house, near Matsue Castle.

We went into the house and they took me to my room. Mr Yamada opened the sliding paper doors, and said, "Is this room OK for you, Old Jack san?"

"Oh yes, it's wonderful!" I said. It had beautiful tatami mats, and sliding paper blinds, called shoji, on the windows. It had a view of the Yamada's traditional garden. It was very different from my house in England. It was charming, and very peaceful.

*Maybe Lafcadio Hearn felt like this when he first came here,* I thought.

I was tired after my long trip, so I had a rest for a few hours. Then, Mr Yamada said to me, "Let's go for a walk. I'll take you to a place with an interesting story."

We walked through the quiet, narrow streets to a place called Nakabara-machi.

"Lafcadio Hearn told an interesting story about this area," said Mr Yamada.

"A ghost story?" I asked.

Mr Yamada smiled. "Yes. A long time ago, there was a small sweet shop here. The shop sold a kind of sweet syrup, called mizu-ame. Mothers gave it to children when there was little milk. One night, just before the shop closed, a woman entered the shop. The shop owner looked at her. She was very thin and pale, and she looked very tired.

"The shop owner thought, *I've never seen her before. She looks sick and tired. Is she OK?*

"The woman bought a small amount of mizu-ame, and left the shop."

"Did she say anything to the shop owner?" I asked.

"No, she didn't. She came back the next night, and the night after that. After a few nights, the shop owner started to worry because the woman looked so sick. So, he decided to follow her."

-----END OF SAMPLE-----