

Aoi No Uye

ZENCHIKU UJINOBU

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PERSONS

Courtier.
Witch.
Princess Rokuj.
The Saint of Yokaro.
Messenger.
Chorus.

(A folded cloak laid in front of the stage symbolizes the sickbed of Aoi.)

Courtier:

I am a courtier in the service of the Emperor Shujaku. You must know that the Prime Minister's daughter, Princess Aoi, has fallen sick. We have sent for abbots and high-priests, of the Greater School and of the Secret School, but they could not cure her.

And now, here at my side, stands the witch of Teruhi, a famous diviner with the bow-string. My lord has been told that by twanging her bow-string she can make visible an evil spirit and tell if it be the spirit of a living man or a dead. So he bade me send for her and let her pluck her string. Turning to the Witch, who has been waiting motionless. Come, sorceress, we are ready!

Witch: comes forward beating a little drum and reciting a mystic formula.

Ten sh j ; chi sh j .

Naige sh j ; rokon sh j .

Pure above; pure below.

Pure without; pure within.

Pure in eyes, ears, heart and tongue.

She plucks her bow-string, reciting the spell.

You whom I call

Hold loose the reins

On your grey colt's neck

As you gallop to me

Over the long sands!

The living phantasm of Rokuj appears at the back of the stage.

Rokuj:

In the Three Coaches

That travel on the Road of Law

I drove out of the Burning House . . .

Is there no way to banish the broken coach

That stands at Y gao's door?

This world

Is like the wheels of the little ox-cart;

Round and round they go. . . till vengeance comes.

The Wheel of Life turns like the wheel of a coach;

There is no escape from the Six Paths and Four Births.

We are brittle as the leaves of the bash ;

As fleeting as foam upon the sea.

Yesterday's flower, to-day's dream.

From such a dream were it not wiser to wake?

And when to this is added another's scorn

How can the heart have rest?

So when I heard the twanging of your bow

For a little while, I thought, I will take my pleasure;

And as an angry ghost appeared.

Oh! I am ashamed!

She veils her face.

This time too I have come secretly

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In a closed coach.

Though I sat till dawn and watched the moon,

Till dawn and watched,

How could I show myself,

That am no more than the mists that tremble over the fields?

I am come, I am come to the notch of your bow

To tell my sorrow.

Whence came the noise of the bow-string?

Witch:

Though she should stand at the wife-door of the mother-house of the square court . . .

Rokuj:

Yet would none come to me, that am not in the flesh.

Witch:

How strange! I see a fine lady whom I do not know riding in a broken coach. She clutches at the shafts of another coach from which the oxen have been unyoked. And in the second coach sits one who seems a new wife. The lady of the broken coach is weeping, weeping. It is a piteous sight.

Can this be she?

Courtier:

It would not be hard to guess who such a one might be. Come, spirit, tell us your name!

Rokuj:

In this Sah World where days fly like the lightning's flash

None is worth hating and none worth pitying.

This I knew. Oh when did folly master me?

You would know who I am that have come drawn by the twanging of your bow? I am the angry ghost of Rokuj ,
Lady of the Chamber.

Long ago I lived in the world.

I sat at flower-feasts among the clouds.

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On spring mornings I rode out
In royal retinue and on autumn nights
Among the red leaves of the Rishis' Cave
I sported with moonbeams,
With colours and perfumes
My senses sated.
I had splendour then;
But now I wither like the Morning Glory
Whose span endures not from dawn to midday.
I have come to clear my hate.

She then quotes the Buddhist saying, "Our sorrows in this world are not caused by others; for even when others wrong us we are suffering the retribution of our own deeds in a previous existence." But while singing these words she turns towards Aoi's bed; passion again seizes her and she cries:

I am full of hatred.

I must strike; I must strike.

She creeps towards the bed.

Witch:

You, Lady Rokuj, you a Lady of the Chamber! Would you lay wait and strike as peasant women do? How can this be? Think and forbear!

Rokuj:

Say what you will, I must strike. I must strike now. Describing her own action. "And as she said this, she went over to the pillow and struck at it." She strikes at the head of the bed with her fan.

Witch:

She is going to strike again. To Rokuj. You shall pay for this!

Rokuj:

And this hate too is payment for past hate.

Witch:

"The flame of anger

Rokuj:

Consumes itself only."

Witch:

Did you not know?

Rokuj:

Know it then now.

Chorus:

O Hate, Hate!

Her hate so deep that on her bed

Our lady moans.

Yet, should she live in the world again,

He would call her to him, her Lord

The Shining One, whose light

Is brighter than fire-fly hovering

Over the slime of an inky pool.

Rokuj:

But for me

There is no way back to what I was,

No more than to the heart of a bramble-thicket.

The dew that dries on the bramble-leaf

Comes back again;

But love (and this is worst)

That not even in dream returns,

That is grown to be an old tale,

Now, even now waxes,

So that standing at the bright mirror

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I tremble and am ashamed.

I am come to my broken coach. She throws down her fan and begins to slip off her embroidered robe. I will hide you in it and carry you away!

She stands right over the bed, then turns away and at the back of the stage throws off her robe, which is held by two attendants in such a way that she cannot be seen. She changes her "deigan" mask for a female demon's mask and now carries a mallet in her hand. Meanwhile the Courtier, who has been standing near the bed:

Courtier:

Come quickly, some one! Princess Aoi is worse. Every minute she is worse. Go and fetch the Little Saint of Yokawa.

Messenger:

I tremble and obey.

He goes to the wing and speaks to some one off the stage.

May I come in?

Saint: speaking from the wing.

Who is it that seeks admittance to a room washed by the moonlight of the Three Mysteries, sprinkled with the holy water of Yoga? Who would draw near to a couch of the Ten Vehicles, a window of the Eight Perceptions?

Messenger:

I am come from the Court. Princess Aoi is ill. They would have you come to her.

Saint:

It happens that at this time I am practising particular austerities and go nowhere abroad. But if you are a messenger from the Court, I will follow you.

He comes on the stage.

Courtier:

We thank you for coming.

Saint:

I wait upon you. Where is the sick person?

Courtier:

On the bed here.

Saint:

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Then I will begin my incantations at once.

Courtier:

Pray do so.

Saint:

He said: "I will say my incantations."

Following in the steps of En no Gy ja,

Clad in skirts that have trailed the Peak of the Two Spheres,

That have brushed the dew of the Seven Precious Trees,

Glad in the cope of endurance

That shields from the world's defilement,

"Sarari, sarari," with such sound

I shake the red wooden beads of my rosary

And say the first spell:

Namaku Samanda Basarada

Namaku Samanda Basarada.

Rokuj: during the incantation she has cowered at the back of the stage wrapped in her Chinese robe, which she has picked up again.

Go back, Gy ja, go back to your home; do not stay and be vanquished!

Saint:

Be you what demon you will, do not hope to overcome the Gy ja's subtle power. I will pray again.

He shakes his rosary whilst the Chorus, speaking for him, invokes the first of the Five Kings.

Chorus:

In the east G Sanze, Subduer of the Three Worlds.

Rokuj: counter-invoking.

In the south Gundari Yasha.

Speaker:

In the west Dai-itoku.

Rokuj:

In the north Kong

Chorus:

Yasha, the Diamond King.

Rokuj:

In the centre the Great Holy

Chorus:

Fud Immutable.

Namaku Samanda Basarada

Senda Makaroshana

Sohataya Untaratarman.

"They that hear my name shall get Great Enlightenment;

They that see my body shall attain to Buddhahood."

Rokuj: suddenly dropping her mallet and pressing her hands to her ears.

The voice of the Hannya Book! I am afraid. Never again will I come as an angry ghost.

Ghost:

When she heard the sound of Scripture

The demon's raging heart was stilled,

Shapes of Pity and Sufferance,

The Bodhisats descend.

Her soul casts off its bonds,

She walks in Buddha's Way.