

IKUTA

Zembo Motoyaso

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PERSONS IN THE PLAY

PRIEST (a follower of Honen Shonin)
ATSUMORI
ATSUMORI'S CHILD
CHORUS

PRIEST.

I am one that serves Honen Shonin of Kurodani; and as for this child here, once when Honen was on a visit to the Temple of Kamo he saw a box lying under a trailing fir-tree; and when he raised the lid, what should he find inside but a lovely man-child one year old! It did not seem to be more than a common foundling, but my master in his compassion took the infant home with him. Ever since then he has had it in his care, doing all that was needful for it; and now the boy is over ten years old.

But it is a hard thing to have no father or mother, so one day after his preaching the Shonin told the child's story.

And sure enough a young woman stepped out from among the hearers and said it was her child. And when he took her aside and questioned her, he found that the child's father was Taira no Atsumori, who had fallen in battle at Ichi-no-Tani years ago. When the boy was told of this, he longed earnestly to see his father's face, were it but a dream, and the Shonin bade him go and pray at the shrine of Kamo. He was to go every day for a week, and this is the last day.

That is why I have brought him out with me.

But here we are at the Kamo Shrine.
Pray well, boy, pray well!

BOY.

How fills my heart with awe
When I behold the crimson palisade

IKUTA

Of this abode of gods!
Oh may my heart be clean
As the River of Ablution; [1]
And the God's kindness deep
As its unfathomed waters. Show to me,
Though it were but in dream,
My father's face and form.
Is not my heart so ground away with prayer,
So smooth that it will slip
Unfelt into the favour of the gods?
But thou too, Censor of our prayers,
God of Tadasu, [2] on the gods prevail
That what I crave may be!

How strange

! While I was praying I fell half-asleep and had a wonderful dream.

PRIEST.

Tell me your wonderful dream.

BOY.

A strange voice spoke to me from within the Treasure Hall, saying, "If you are wanting, though it were but in a dream, to see your father's face, go down from here to the woods of Ikuta in the country of Settsu." That is the marvellous dream I had.

PRIEST.

It is indeed a wonderful message that the God has sent you. And why should I go back at once to Kurodani? I had best take you straight to the forest of Ikuta. Let us be going.

(describing the journey)
From the shrine of Kamo,
From under the shadow of the hills,
We set out swiftly;
Past Yamazaki to the fog-bound

IKUTA

IKUTA

Shores of Minasé;

And onward where thld I go back at once to Kurodani? I had best take you straight to the forest if Ikuta. Let us be going.

(describing the journey)

From the shrine of Kamo,
From under the shadow of the hills,
We set out swiftly;
Past Yamazaki to the fog-bound
Shores of Minasé;
And onward where the gale
Tears travellers' coats and winds about their bones.

"Autumn has come to woods where yesterday
We might have plucked the green." [3]
To Settsu, to those woods of Ikuta
Lo! we are come.

We have gone so fast that here we are already at the woods of Ikuta in the country of Settsu. I have heard tell in the Capital of the beauty of these woods and the river that runs through them. But what I see no surpasses all that I have heard.

Look ! Those meadows must be the Downs of Ikuta. Let us go nearer and admire them.

But while we have been going about looking at one view and another, the day has dusked.

I think I see a light over there. There must be a house. Let us go to it and ask for lodging.

ATSUMORI (speaking from inside a hut).

Beauty, perception, knowledge, motion, consciousness,—
The Five Attributes of Being,—
All are vain mockery.
How comes it that men prize
So weak a thing as body?
For the soul that guards it from corruption
Suddenly to the night-moon flies,
And the poor naked ghost wails desolate
In the autumn wind.

Oh ! I am lonely! I am lonely!

PRIEST.

How strange! Inside that grass-hut I see a young soldier dressed in helmet and breastplate. What can he be doing here?

ATSUMORI.

Oh foolish men, was it not to meet me that you came to this place? I am—oh! I am ashamed to say it,—I am the ghost of what once was . . . Atsumori.

BOY.

Atsumori? My father . . .

CHORUS.

And lightly he ran,
Plucked at the warrior's sleeve,
And though his tears might seem like the long woe
Of nightingales that weep,
Yet were they tears of meeting—joy,
Of happiness too great for human heart.
So think we, yet oh that we might change
This fragile dream of joy
Into the lasting love of waking life!

ATSUMORI.

Oh pitiful!
To see this child, born after me,
Darling that should be gay as a flower,
Walking in tattered coat of old black cloth.
Alas!
Child, when your love of me
Led you to Kamo shrine, praying to the God
That, though but in a dream,
You might behold my face,
The God of Kamo, full of pity, came
To Yama, king of Hell.
King Yama listened and ordained for me
A moment's respite, but hereafter, never.

CHORUS.

"The moon is sinking.
Come while the night is dark," he said,
"I will tell my tale."

ATSUMORI.

When the house of Taira was in its pride,
When its glory was young,
Among the flowers we sported,
Among birds, wind and moonlight;
With pipes and strings, with song and verse
We welcomed Springs and Autumns.
Till at last, because our time was come,
Across the bridges of Kiso a host unseen
Swept and devoured us.
Then the whole clan
Our lord leading
Fled from the City of Flowers.
By paths untrodden
To the Western Sea our journey brought us.
Lakes and hills we crossed
Till we ourselves grew to be like wild men.
At last by mountain ways—
We too tossed hither and thither like its waves—
To Suma came we,
To the First Valley and the woods of Ikuta.
And now while all of us,
We children of Taira, were light of heart
Because our homes were near,
Suddenly our foes in great strength appeared.

CHORUS.

Noriyori, Yoshitsune,—their hosts like clouds,
Like mists of spring.
For a little while we fought them,
But the day of our House was ended,
Our hearts weakened
That had been swift as arrows from the bowstring,
We scattered, scattered; till at last
To the deep waters of the Field of Life [4]
We came, but how we found there Death, not Life,
What profit were it to tell?

ATSUMORI.

Who is that?

(Pointing in terror at a figure which he sees off the stage.)

Can it be Yama's messenger? He comes to tell me that I have outstayed my time. The Lord of Hell is angry: he asks why I am late?

CHORUS.

So he spoke. But behold
Suddenly black clouds rise,
Earth and sky resound with the clash of arms;
War-demons innumerable
Flash fierce sparks from brandished spears.

ATSUMORI.

The Shura foes who night and day
Come thick about me!

CHORUS.

He waves his sword and rushes among them,
Hither and Thither he runs slashing furiously;
Fire glints upon the steel.
But in a little while
The dark clouds recede;
The demons have vanished,
The moon shines unsullied;
The sky is ready for dawn.

ATSUMORI.

Oh! I am ashamed . . .
And the child to see me so

CHORUS.

"To see my misery!
I must go back.

IKUTA

Oh pray for me; pray for me
When I am gone," he said,
And weeping, weeping,
Dropped the child's hand.
He has faded; he dwindles
Like the dew from rush-leaves
Of hazy meadows.
His form has vanished.

CURTAIN