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## INTRODUCTION

*Izutsu* is a *kazura-mono* or 'female-wig' play in which the *jo-no-mai* dance is accompanied by a large and a small hand-drum.

About a thousand years ago there lived two famous lovers: Ariwara-no-Narihira, one of the Six Major Poets<sup>1</sup> of the Early Heian Period (794-930), and the daughter of Ki-no-Arisesune. Narihira who came of a princely family and was known not less for his gallantry than for his poetry, has since become a legendary figure. In this play, however, the Narihira legend is greatly modified. As children, hero and heroine were neighbours. Outside the gate of one of their houses was a well, and the children used to lean over its wooden curb (*izutsu*) and peer down at their smiling faces and flowing hair reflected in its waters. As they grew older, they became self-conscious and shy of each other. In spite of this, their mutual attachment was growing stronger, and later they married. Their married life, however, was not happy. For Narihira, who was by nature passionate and fickle, soon fell in love with another woman living over the hills in Kawachi Province, to whom he paid nightly visits. But the unselfish devotion of his wife stirring his heart, he returned to her, and they lived happily together until his death. Such is the playwright's treatment of the Narihira legend where, as will be seen, the wife's love which survives her death is symbolized by the ghost that haunts the grave and offers flowers to Narihira's memory, thus suggesting the eternity of love.

In Part One a travelling priest visits a temple which, according to tradition, was built on the site of the house occupied by Narihira and his wife. The sight of an old wooden well-curb half-hidden by *susuki* grass and of an ancient tombstone, recalls to his mind their famous love-story.

In Part Two the heroine, dressed in her husband's princely robe and headgear, performs an *utsuri-mai* (impersonation dance)—in this case a type of *jo-no-mai* accompanied by a large and a small hand-drum. The climax is reached when the wife in her intense longing for the past identifies herself, as it were, with her husband and reclining on the well-curb sees his image in place of her own reflected

<sup>1</sup> Critical remarks on these poets (Abbot Henjō, Ono-no-Komachi, Bun'ya-no-Yasuhide, Ōtomo-no-Kuronusi, Monk Kisen and Ariwara-no-Narihira) appear in the preface of the *Kokinshū*.

## THE NOH DRAMA

in the still waters below her. All this, however, is but a vision. Day dawns, the vision fades, and nothing remains but dreary reality which fills the priest with sadness and regret.

Author: Zeami Motokiyo (1363-1443)

Source: *Ise Monogatari*,<sup>1</sup> chap. xxii; The prefatory note to the poems exchanged by the two lovers and contained in Vol. XV of the *Kokinshū*, which states explicitly that Narihira married Arisune's daughter.

<sup>1</sup> Though the real authorship is disputed, the author of the tale is popularly attributed to Narihira himself.

# IZUTSU

## *Persons*

TRAVELLING PRIEST

MAIDEN

MAN OF THE PLACE

GHOST OF KI-NO-ARITSUNE'S DAUGHTER

*Waki*

*Shite* in Part One

*Kyōgen*

*Shite* in Part Two

## *Place*

Ariwara Temple, Isonokami, Yamato Province

## *Season*

Autumn

## PART ONE

*Stage-attendants place on the front of the stage a framework square well-curb with a sheaf of susuki grass at one corner.*

### 1

*While the entrance music nanoribue is being played, the PRIEST, wearing a pointed hood, plain kimono and broad-sleeved robe, appears and advances to the Shite Seat.*

PRIEST I am a priest on pilgrimage from province to province. Of late I have visited the Seven Great Temples of Nara,<sup>1</sup> and now am on my way to Hatsuse.<sup>2</sup>



<sup>1</sup> The temples referred to are: Tōdai-ji (東大寺), Kōfuku-ji (興福寺), Gangō-ji (元興寺), Daian-ji (大安寺), Yakushi-ji (藥師寺), Saidai-ji (西大寺), and Hōryū-ji (法隆寺). Some are situated in the city itself, others in the neighbourhood.

Situated in Yamato Province and famous for the Hase-dera Temple dating from the eighth century.

## THE NOH DRAMA

When I enquired from someone about this temple, I was told it was the Ariwara Temple. I will enter the grounds and see what it is like.

*Advances to the centre of the stage and faces the well-curb.*

Surely in bygone days the Ariwara Temple  
Was the Isonokami home  
Where Narihira and Ki-no-Aritsune's  
daughter  
Once lived as man and wife.  
Surely here too was written  
"Over Tatsuta's mountain pass<sup>1</sup>  
Perilous as storm-tossed seas. . ."

*sage-uta*

As I stand on the site of this ancient tale,  
I feel the transitoriness of life.  
Now, for the sake of those twin souls,  
Will I perform religious rites,  
Will I perform religious rites.

*Joins his hands in prayer and moves to the Waki Seat.*

## 2

*While the entrance music shidai is being played, the MAIDEN, wearing a 'young woman' mask, wig, painted gold-patterned under-kimono and brocade outer-kimono, appears carrying a spray of leaves<sup>2</sup> and stands at the Shite Seat.*

MAIDEN  
*shidai*

Gazing into the crystal water I draw each  
morning,



<sup>1</sup> Pass crossing a hill of the same name in the mountain-range between Yamato and Kawachi Provinces. The Tatsuta Shrine, one of the most ancient Shinto temples, situated on the eastern slope of Tatsuta Hill south of Mt. Shigi, was erected in the seventh century by Imperial order and dedicated to the wind-god. The river flowing east of the hill is also called Tatsuta and has been much celebrated in ancient literature on account of the autumn tints of the maples which line its banks.

<sup>2</sup> Or a small wooden bucket with a spray of leaves representing flowers.



IZUTSU

Gazing into the crystal water I draw each  
morning,  
The moon, too, seems to cleanse her heart.

CHORUS  
*jidori* Gazing into the crystal water I draw each  
morning,  
The moon, too, seems to cleanse her heart.

MAIDEN  
*sashi* Autumn nights are lonely anywhere,  
Yet even lonelier  
Is this old temple rarely visited,  
When the autumn winds sigh through the  
garden pines.  
The moon sinking westward,  
The drooping eaves o'ergrown with waving  
ferns—  
All reminds me of the past.  
Alas ! how long must I still live  
And naught to hope for in the future !  
Each thing that happens leaves its mark  
upon the mind ;  
Such is our mortal world.

*sage-uta* Buddha, I cast myself on thee  
With all my heart, praying continually  
That with the unseen thread held in thy  
hand<sup>1</sup>  
Thou wilt at last lead me to Paradise !

*age-uta* Thy vow is to enlighten those in darkness,  
Thy vow is to enlighten those in darkness.  
Although the moon at dawn  
Does surely hasten towards the western  
hills



<sup>1</sup> In Jōdo-kyō except for the Shin sect, it was customary for a dying person to hold in the left hand one end of a thread attached to a hand of the image of Amida Buddha in order that he should fix his mind on His saving power.

# THE NOH DRAMA

Where lies the Land of Bliss,  
Yet between here and there  
Stretches the vast and empty autumn sky  
As far as eye can reach.  
We hear the winds soughing through the  
pines,  
But know not whence they blow nor  
whither.<sup>1</sup>



In this world more fleeting than the wind,  
Vain dreams deceive our minds.  
What call will have the power to waken us,  
What call will have the power to waken us !

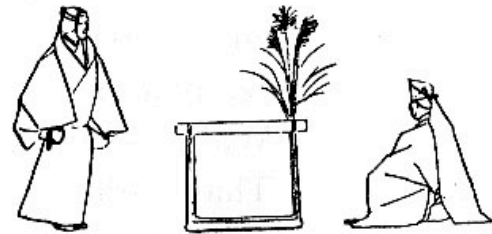
*Comes to the front  
of the stage, sits down,  
places the spray of  
leaves before her and  
joins her hands in pray-  
er, then returns to the  
Shite Seat.*

## 3

PRIEST While meditating in the temple grounds I see  
an attractive woman draw water from a well  
with a wooden curb and, having poured it into  
a wooden vessel containing flowers, offer it  
reverently to a grass-covered  
mound. Pray, who are  
you?

*Turns to the MAID-  
EN.*

MAIDEN I am a woman of this  
neighbourhood. The pious  
benefactor of this temple,  
Ariwara-no-Narihira, was a famous man and  
the tombstone by this mound is supposed to be  
his. Therefore I offer flowers to it and pray  
for his salvation.



PRIEST Yes, Narihira has left an undying name be-  
hind him. This place may indeed have been

<sup>1</sup> The metaphor seems analogous to that found in the third chapter of *St. John*, except that here the changeableness of wind is used to symbolize the uncertainty of human life.

the site of his home, but since his story goes back to ancient times, I am filled with wonder that any one, especially a woman, should thus be praying for him.

Perchance you are related to him?

MAIDEN You ask whether I am related to him? But even in his day he was called the 'Ancient.'<sup>1</sup> Now, after this long lapse of time, he belongs to the remote past. How can there still live any one related to him?

PRIEST You speak truth,  
Yet this was once his home.

MAIDEN Though he is long since dead,

PRIEST This place remains as it was once,

MAIDEN And tales that keep his fame alive

PRIEST Are handed down to us.

MAIDEN So the 'Ancient'

CHORUS Is still remembered,

*age-uta* Though time-worn is the Ariwara Temple,  
Though time-worn is the Ariwara Temple.

Grass covers this mound

Shadowed by ancient pines,

And only this one bush

Of flowering *susuki*

Marks where he sleeps for evermore,

And might, indeed, unfold a tale

Of bygone days.

The sight of this old mound,

Hidden under lush grass

Drenched with weary dew,



<sup>1</sup> Each chapter of the *Ise Monogatari* begins with the words: "In ancient times there was a man." Since the anonymous hero is understood to be Narihira, the author of the present play pretends that Narihira was called the 'Ancient' in his life-time.

THE NOH DRAMA

Is precious to the lonely heart,  
Is precious to the lonely heart !

*The MAIDEN sits  
down and weeps.*

4

PRIEST I wish you would tell me more about Narihira.

*The MAIDEN rises  
and, coming to the centre  
of the stage, sits  
down.*

CHORUS Once Narihira, captain of the Imperial  
*kuri* Body-guard,  
Enjoyed for many years spring flowers and  
autumn moons

Here at Isonokami, then fallen into decay.

MAIDEN 'Twas when he lived in wedlock  
*sashi* With Ki-no-Aritsune's daughter,  
Bound each to other by strong love !

CHORUS Later bewitched by a new love  
At Takayasu<sup>1</sup> in Kawachi Province,  
And loth to give up either,  
Secretly he visited her of nights.

MAIDEN "Over Tatsuta's mountain pass,  
CHORUS Perilous as storm-tossed seas,  
He speeds at midnight all alone !"

Thus sang his wife  
Fearing that treacherous pass.  
Moved by her selfless love,  
His new love withered.

MAIDEN Since poetry alone can tell our deepest  
feelings,

CHORUS Well might her selfless love inspire such a  
moving poem.

*kuse* Here in this province long ago  
Two households once lived side by side,

<sup>1</sup> Situated at the foot of a mountain of the same name in Naka-Kawachi County of that province.



The children, boy and girl, were playmates;  
 Leaning over the well-curb beyond the gate,  
 They peered together down the well  
 Where mirrored lay their faces cheek to  
 cheek,  
 Their sleeves hanging o'er each other's  
 shoulder.



Thus used those bosom friends to play.  
 In time they grew reserved and shy,  
 Till the faithful-hearted youth  
 Sent her a letter with a poem  
 Telling his flower-like love  
 In words like sparkling dew-drops:

MAIDEN

"Standing against the well-curb,  
 As children we compared our heights,

CHORUS

But I have grown much taller  
 Since last I saw you."<sup>1</sup>

Answering the maiden wrote:

"The hair I parted  
 When by the well-curb we compared  
 our heights,  
 Now loose flows down my back.  
 For whom but you should it again be  
 tied?"<sup>2</sup>

For this exchange of poems  
 They called her the 'Lady of the Well-  
 Curb.'

## 5

CHORUS  
*rongi*

Listening to this ancient lovers' tale,  
 I am filled with wonder at your charm.

<sup>1, 2</sup> Quoted from the *Ise Monogatari*, chap. xxii.

## THE NOH DRAMA

MAIDEN Please disclose your name !  
If you would know the truth,  
Taking the shape of Aritsune's daughter,  
By yearning moved, I have come back to  
my old home,  
Treading under the veil of night  
A road perilous as the Tatsuta Pass.  
CHORUS How wonderful !  
Then you are the lady of the Tatsuta Pass ?  
MAIDEN " Daughter of Ki-no-Aritsune " am I  
CHORUS And " Lady of the Well-Curb " too.  
MAIDEN With shame I own to both those names.  
CHORUS Scarce has she revealed the name  
Of her who tied the nuptial knot  
When but nineteen  
And made her vow before the gods,  
Than she fades away behind the well-curb,  
Than she fades away behind the well-curb.



*The MAIDEN rises.*

*The MAIDEN goes out.*

## INTERLUDE

The MAN OF THE PLACE *enters the stage, wearing a striped kimono, sleeveless robe and trailing divided skirt, and short sword. In reply to the PRIEST's request, he tells him the tale of Ki-no-Aritsune's DAUGHTER.*

## PART TWO

### 1

PRIEST The night is growing old !  
*machi-utai* Above the temple hangs the moon,  
Above the temple hangs the moon.

IZUTSU

Wishing to dream of times gone by,  
I turn my robe inside out,<sup>1</sup>  
And lay me down upon this bed of moss,  
And lay me down upon this bed of moss.



2

*While the entrance music issei is being played, the GHOST OF KI-NO-ARITSUNE'S DAUGHTER, wearing a 'young woman' mask, wig, man's ceremonial headgear, painted gold-patterned under-kimono, dancing chōken robe and embroidered koshimaki outer-kimono, appears and stands at the Shite Seat.*

DAUGHTER    "Though people call them shift,  
sashi        Yet the cherry-blossoms never fail  
              Him who seeks my garden once a year  
              Less for my sake than for theirs.'<sup>2</sup>  
              This poem gained for me  
              The name of 'Friend-Awaiting Woman.'  
              Many a year has passed with varying fortunes  
              Since Narihira and I played by the well-curb;  
              Now bereft of him, though ill-becoming,  
              I don this robe he gave me  
              And dance as he was wont to do.

CHORUS        Graceful as whirling flakes of snow,



<sup>1</sup> It was an ancient custom for lovers to sleep with their kimono turned inside out so that they might dream of their beloved, as mentioned in a poem by Ono-no-Komachi in the *Kokinshū*:

When overwhelmed  
By the yearning for the one I love,  
I go to bed,  
Wearing my garment inside out.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted from the *Ise Monogatari*, chap. xvi, as attributed to the hero of the work, i.e. Narihira. The poem is also found in the *Kokinshū* where the author's name is not mentioned.

# THE NOH DRAMA

The dancer waves her flowery sleeves.  
*The DAUGHTER performs a jo-no-mai dance.*

DAUGHTER Hither returned I call back time past  
 CHORUS And on the ancient well  
 Of the Ariwara Temple  
 The moon shines brightly as of old,  
 The moon shines brightly as of old.



## 3

DAUGHTER "Is not the moon in heaven the same?  
 Is not the springtime as it was?"<sup>1</sup>  
 Thus did he sing, long, long ago.  
 "Standing against the well-curb,

*Dances while the following lines are chanted.*

CHORUS Standing against the well-curb,  
 As children we compared our heights.

DAUGHTER But I

CHORUS Have grown much taller."

DAUGHTER And much older.

CHORUS Wearing this robe and headgear  
 As Narihira did,  
 It does not look like a woman,  
 But a man—the living image of Narihira.



*Approaching the well, the DAUGHTER pushes aside the susuki grass and peers down into it.*

DAUGHTER How dear the face I see !

CHORUS How dear the face, though it be mine !  
 See ! The ghost of the dead lady fades  
 Like the lingering scent of fading flowers.  
 The sky is turning grey ;  
 The Ariwara Temple's bell starts to toll,  
 Ushering in the morn.

*The DAUGHTER moves away.*

*She wraps the left sleeve round her arm and covers her face with the open fan and bends forward.*

*She stands still as if listening to the bell.*



The garden pines awaken with the breeze ;

<sup>1</sup> Quoted from the *Ise Monogatari*, chap. iv. The poem, which also appears in the *Kokinshū* and is a cry of a heart-broken lover whose beloved had been taken away whither he did not know, is translated in its full form on p. 83, note 1.



IZUTSU

And like the torn leaves of the *bashō*<sup>1</sup>-tree  
The priest's dream is shattered and day  
dawns,  
The priest's dream is shattered and day  
dawns.

*She stamps twice at  
the Shite Seat.*

<sup>1</sup> See *Bashō*, p. 127, note 1.