

鳴神不動北山桜

Saint Narukami and the God Fudō

NARUKAMI FUDŌ KITAYAMA ZAKURA

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This all-day (*tōshi kyōgen*) imperial court play (*ōchōmono* or *ōdaimono*) was performed January through July 1742 by the Sadoshima Chōgorō troupe at the Ōnishi Theater in Osaka. The play's great success is attributed to the skill with which favorite scenes of the visiting guest star from Edo, Ichikawa Danjūrō II, were melded with new materials. The first kabuki play about the seduction of a powerful ascetic by a court lady, the basic plot of *Saint Narukami*, was written and acted in by Danjūrō I in 1684. But the legend is ancient. It is found in the *Nalinika Jataka* stories in India and these were translated into Chinese around the fourth century. Erotic accounts of the story are included in the Japanese *Konjaku Monogatari* (eleventh century) and the *Taiheiki* (fourteenth century). A nō play on the subject (*Ikkaku Senin*, translated by Frank Hoff and William Packard, in *Traditional Asian Plays*) is austere and elliptical. Danjūrō returned to the graphic approach of the earlier chronicles in which the seduction was made central. To this he added the low comedy of the monks White Cloud and Black Cloud. In 1697 Danjūrō I also wrote and played the lead in *The God Fudō*, astonishing the audience with his portrayal of this fearsome deity. He and his son, Danjūrō II, revived *Saint Narukami* seven times and *The God Fudō* three times during the following half-century. For the 1742 production these two well-known plays were worked into the Disputed Throne World of the Heian court. Another act of the long play was *The Whisker Tweezers*, which capitalized on the discovery of lodestones in Japan in 1717. The three were revived frequently, usually as acts within long plays. Danjūrō VII included all three as independent, one-act plays in his selection of "Eighteen Favorite Plays." After the time of Danjūrō VIII (1823–1854) the plays fell into disfavor. *Saint Narukami* was

not performed for a period of 49 years (1851–1900), *The Whisker Tweezers* for 59 years (1850–1909), and *The God Fudō* for 131 years (1780–1911). During his long career, Danjūrō IX (1838–1903) refused to perform any of them. It is said that the suicide of Danjūrō VIII in 1851 while performing the title role in *Saint Narukami* made him shun the play as unlucky. It also seems probable that he hesitated to perform *Saint Narukami* or *The Whisker Tweezers* because in the prudish atmosphere of turn-of-the-century Japan the eroticism of the plays was unacceptable. Morally offensive lines were expurgated in an important edition of *Saint Narukami* published in 1936. We know the plays today through revivals (based on the 1742 text) staged by Ichikawa Sadanji II between 1909 and 1911. *Saint Narukami* is particularly popular with modern audiences and has been produced more than fifty times in the past four decades.

It is probable that the authors chose the world of Fujiwara Mototsune (836–891) because he was a famous historical figure, the first of the powerful Fujiwara regents who controlled the government during the Heian era. This was a period of unprecedented natural disasters, and Mototsune was well known historically for his support of incantations and rituals to placate the vengeful spirits believed to have caused the famines and floods that plagued the country. The period thus provided a natural setting for the story of the drought in *Saint Narukami* and the *God Fudō*. At the same time audiences would have been familiar with many settings in the play: images of the *God Fudō* were venerated at a grotto in the mountains near the Arashiyama River, north of Kyoto, where Saint Narukami was said to have trapped the rain gods; the Shinsen Temple and its adjoining lake into which the Ono family poem card was to be immersed can still be seen on the imperial palace grounds in Kyoto; Tree Island Shrine stood outside the capital on the road to Osaka; and the remains of the ancient inner palace could probably still be identified.

The bravura style of the Ichikawa family is exemplified in the heroic roles of Danjō, Narukami, and Fudō (all played by Danjūrō II in 1742) and by the court villain (kugeaku) Hayakumo. Typical of the exaggerated style of aragoto, Danjō roars as he prepares to expose the spy in the ceiling, “*Yattoko totcha, untoko na!*” It is a made-up phrase that is intended to sound imposingly fierce (the same phrase is used in *Sukeroku: Flower of Edo*, and other aragoto plays). The play is sometimes described as the last important “conversation” play of “pure” kabuki, before the influence of the

puppet theater. Except for short sections of Ōzatsuma narrative music when Saint Narukami enters and when he transforms himself into a Thunder God, music is entirely offstage atmospheric geza music. (The dance-mime sections accompanied by narrative music of onstage Takemoto, Tokiwazu, Nagauta, or Tomimoto ensembles seen in current productions of *Saint Narukami* as a one-act play were added between 1773 and 1843, and are not part of the 1742 text.)

The present translation is based on an abridged version of the 1742 text of *Saint Narukami and the God Fudō*, prepared for production at the National Theater of Japan in 1967. Tobe Ginsaku was adapter and director. Narukami's death at the hands of Danjō was not included in the production, and other smaller cuts were made. Many independent versions of *Saint Narukami*, *The God Fudō*, and *The Whisker Tweezers* have been published. Annotated texts in Gunji Masakatsu, ed., *Kabuki Jūhachibanshū*, were consulted as well as in Toita Yasuji, ed., *Kabuki Meisakusen* (vol. 15, 1956), and Kawatake Shigetoshi, ed., *Kabuki Jūhachibanshū*. Most stage directions are from the production of *Saint Narukami and The God Fudō*, National Theater of Japan, Tokyo, January 1967.

A story prior to Scene 2:

Angered at the emperor's failure to keep a promise, high priest Narukami uses his special powers to trap the dragon gods of rain in a rock pool beneath the waterfall close to his mountain retreat. A great draught spreads throughout the land and, growing desperate, the emperor sends the most beautiful woman at court, Kumo no Taema no Hime, to seduce Narukami and set the dragon gods free.

SCENE 2 A GROTTO ON NORTH MOUNTAIN (“SAINT NARUKAMI”
SCENE)

[Music changes to lively Haya Tsutsumi, “Fast Drum,” played by the small drums and flute. The young monks WHITE CLOUD and BLACK CLOUD enter, one on each banamichi. They are dressed in white kimonos covered in front by a black apron. Their heads are shaved and they carry black rosaries. They trot on comically, talking as they go, hands tucked up in their sleeves to ward off the mountain cold.]

WHITE CLOUD: Have you heard? Have you heard?

BLACK CLOUD: I've heard. I've heard.

WHITE CLOUD: Have you heard?

BLACK CLOUD: I've heard.

[They continue the exchange until they meet in front of the curtain center stage. Music ends.]

WHITE CLOUD [delighted to see his friend] : What have you heard?

BLACK CLOUD [foolishly] : Everyone in Edo saying “Saint Narukami and the God Fudo” is a great play!²¹

WHITE CLOUD: Donkey. Not that. I mean are people talking about our Master Narukami’s secret rites?

BLACK CLOUD [blankly] : I haven’t heard a thing.

WHITE CLOUD [disgusted] : You haven’t? What he does is remarkable. Listen. [Shamisen play delicate Haru wa Hanami, “Spring Flower Viewing,” in the background.]

The Emperor denied Saint Narukami’s request that to him a temple be ordained, so, furious, he embarked upon austerities which have captured and bound the Dragon Gods of Rain in all the universe until not a drop of rain could fall. One hundred days have passed since the last single drop of rain has been seen. The land shrivels from dryness.

BLACK CLOUD: It’s fine if you like your humidity low, but it must be hard for a farmer to stick his rice in the ground.

WHITE CLOUD: It’s awe-inspiring to imagine Master’s power.

BLACK CLOUD: It’s the Emperor’s own fault. He told a fib.

WHITE CLOUD [scandalized] : Shh! Being Master Narukami’s disciple is a great honor. He is the needle, we are the thread. [Mimes threading a needle.]

BLACK CLOUD: Well, I’m worn to a frazzle—up the mountain every morning to help Master with his austerities, down the mountain to sleep. Three miles each way and it’s cold up here.

WHITE CLOUD [severely] : If Master freezes, we freeze to death with him. That’s what spiritual discipline means.

BLACK CLOUD: My legs have gone numb with the climbing, up and down, up and down.

WHITE CLOUD: I’m tired too, but I don’t complain about it. You’re a perfect dummy.

BLACK CLOUD [snickering] : If my tongue went numb I’d be a dumb dummy.

WHITE CLOUD: That would be a blessed relief.

BLACK CLOUD [slyly] : I’ve got medicine here that will take off the chill. You’ll feel fit as a fiddle fast. How about a sip?

WHITE CLOUD: And is it good? I might try a drop.

BLACK CLOUD: It’s the No-Death-No-Pain-Cures-a-Thousand-Complaints-Pharmaceutical-Preparation.

WHITE CLOUD: Well, where is it?

BLACK CLOUD: So precious I wouldn’t dream of carrying it up my sleeve or in my sash. [Gestures.] I’ll open the gates and bring it out.

21. The comic routine “Have you heard? Have you heard?” is found in many variations in scripts of *Narukami*. It seems to have been used first in the 1698 production and so was a well-established piece of business by 1742. Two, three, or four monks may appear.

WHITE CLOUD: Gates? You're going all the way down to the temple for it?

There's no storehouse here.

BLACK CLOUD [grinning] : Yes there is. To groin a phrase, the medicine is up my crotch. Isn't that a perfect hiding place for something precious? Besides, crotch heat will hold the medicine at just the right temperature for drinking. [He produces a small bottle of rice wine from between his legs.] Here. [Takes a wine cup from his sleeve.] And here. [Offers them.] Here you are.

WHITE CLOUD: Dissolute, defiled, corrupted, filthy, worldly, dirty monk!

BLACK CLOUD: It's just a little wine.

WHITE CLOUD: Lord Buddha has enjoined murder, theft, lust, lies, and drunkenness. In the midst of our Master Narukami's strict meditation do you dare break the Buddha's commandment?

BLACK CLOUD: It keeps off the dampness.

WHITE CLOUD [chuckling in spite of himself] : So it does.

BLACK CLOUD [raises bottle over his head] : Since my elder objects, however, I'll smash this bottle to bits on the rock.

WHITE CLOUD: No, no! What a sacrilege it would be to waste Lord Buddha's bounty, for is not rice, multiplied a thousand times ten-thousand grains, nature's source of sake? It would be better if we must eliminate the sake to do so . . . by drinking it! Perhaps I'll have a sip.

[BLACK CLOUD pours a cup. WHITE CLOUD downs it and sighs. Music stops.]

Ahh. You know, when I toss off a cup like that, I feel as if I was being born in Buddha's promised paradise. I'll pour for you.

BLACK CLOUD [drinks] : Hmm, very good. But there's nothing to go with it.

WHITE CLOUD: Yes there is, yes there is. [He brings out a dried octopus from between his legs.] I knew we'd get famished. I brought an . . .

BLACK CLOUD: Octopus! A monk who'd eat flesh is depraved. Every servant of the Buddha takes a nip now and then, but eating meat in Master Narukami's place of meditation? I'll tell him.

WHITE CLOUD: You wouldn't.

BLACK CLOUD: Just see if I don't. [Snatches octopus.] Master! Master! White Cloud's eating octopus!

WHITE CLOUD [snatches bottle] : Black Cloud's drinking wine! Master Narukami!

BLACK CLOUD: White Cloud smells of fish!

[WHITE CLOUD raps BLACK CLOUD sharply on the head with his knuckles to a loud ki clack. The rock curtain drops to the floor and is whisked away by STAGE ASSISTANTS. The sign reads "North Mountain Grotto Scene." It is the retreat of NARUKAMI, a Buddhist saint whose name means Thunderbolt. Towering gray and black rock cliffs hem in the scene. Rock steps ascend to a natural platform, right, which looks out onto a waterfall that plunges from above into a gorge below. A ritual straw rope, tied with sacred white papers, spans the waterfall. Left, a small, rustic pavilion roofed with thatch stands on a rock outcropping. The large drum

booms out Yama Oroshi mountain storm pattern. The two monks kneel on either side of a small flight of steps leading up to the pavilion and piously take out rosaries. STAGE ASSISTANTS remove a blue and white striped curtain by the proscenium arch left. We see an Ōzatsuma SINGER and shamisen PLAYER seated on a dais.]

ŌZATSUMA SINGER [sings very slowly, in elaborate style, to deep shamisen music] :

In the meantime, the great Saint Narukami,
Blocks the flight of Dragon Gods and Goddesses,
Confining the earth's rain.
Going deep into the mountains,
He undergoes strict austerities,
Before Buddha's altar.²²

[*During the song NARUKAMI enters on the banamichi. He is sunk in meditation. Wearing a thick silver-gray kimono, his hair has been uncut for three months and it reaches his shoulders. He holds a large Buddhist rosary before him. He stops at the seven-three position and turns toward the audience.*]

NARUKAMI [rumbling voice] : Hmm. Leaves are blown by the wind; in all things there is cause.

[*Ōzatsuma shamisen plays rapidly as NARUKAMI crosses ponderously to the platform. He kneels, facing the waterfall, and clasps his hands in prayer.*]

At this waterfall's rock-crushing stream, human impurity washed away,
I bend my spirit to achieve perfect meditation.

[*He faces the altar above which hangs a scroll painting of Fudoō.*]

Praise to Buddha the all-powerful. Praise to the all-powerful Fudoō.

[*He rings a prayer bell. The curtain covering the Ōzatsuma musicians is replaced. The large drum beats steady, suspenseful Taki Oto waterfall pattern. A bell is heard from the end of the banamichi.*]

CHORUS [sings offstage right to shamisen accompaniment] :

Hail great Guardian God Fudoō.

Hail great Guardian God Fudoō.

[*The sound of a struck prayer bell mingles with the repeated prayer to Fudoō and insistent drum beating of Taki Oto waterfall pattern. The banamichi curtain opens and TAEMA enters dressed in an elegant red kimono patterned with spring flowers. It is pulled off the right shoulder, showing an inner kimono. A black robe is folded over her arm. Though she strikes a prayer bell, her walk is languorous and extremely sensual. TAEMA pivots in a circle at seven-three looking about. She sees the waterfall, then NARUKAMI. She poses. The music ends. She takes a deliberately provocative pose and calls out in a pathetic voice.*]

TAEMA: Help me great Guardian God Fudoō. Help me great Guardian God Fudoō.

22. The syllable count of the song is unusually irregular (5-8-7-7-6-10-5-7-5) and is not maintained in the translation.

[She waits to see what effect this will have. NARUKAMI turns front, still kneeling. His head is bowed, his eyes half closed. Still in meditation, NARUKAMI is scarcely aware of his surroundings. A STAGE ASSISTANT scurries onto the banamichi with a tall black stool for TAEMA to sit on. She hands him the prayer bell and hammer. Spaced beats of the small drum are heard, first near and then far away, in the pattern called Kodama, "Mountain Echo," and shamisen gently play the same melody.]

NARUKAMI [rumbling voice] : In the mountain is total silence, not a bird calls. Strange. Then why do I hear the sound of prayers to Buddha at this remote waterfall, deep in the mountains where a human footstep is rare? [Calling in a detached manner.] White Cloud. Black Cloud.

WHITE CLOUD and BLACK CLOUD [waking and rubbing their eyes] : Yes, Master?

NARUKAMI: Were you sleeping? Indolent monks.

WHITE CLOUD: How can you think that, Master? I wouldn't doze off. Not me. [Points to BLACK CLOUD.] Black Cloud was sleeping.

BLACK CLOUD [pointing to WHITE CLOUD] : You were, you were. What a thing, accusing me. Dear Master. I kept guard with eyes like saucers. I really did. White Cloud was the one sleeping.

WHITE CLOUD: I didn't doze off. You did.

BLACK CLOUD: You were sleeping, liar.

WHITE CLOUD: You were sleeping, dunce.

BLACK CLOUD: You!

WHITE CLOUD: You!

[They rise on their knees, about to come to blows.]

NARUKAMI [undisturbed by their foolishness] : Come. Is this the conduct of Buddha's servants?

[They wilt, bowing their heads.]

WHITE CLOUD and BLACK CLOUD: Yes, Master.

NARUKAMI: Good. Since you say you were not sleeping, surely you heard just now . . . ?

WHITE CLOUD and BLACK CLOUD: Heard . . . just now?

NARUKAMI: . . . in this distant grotto a woeful voice invoking Buddha's name? Did it only seem to be? Or was it truly . . . a ghostly spirit?

[He pauses. Music stops. The monks tremble, frightened.]

WHITE CLOUD and BLACK CLOUD: Ehhhhh?

NARUKAMI [serenely] : Both of you. Go to the foot of the waterfall and see what it is.

WHITE CLOUD and BLACK CLOUD: Ehhh?

NARUKAMI: Are you going?

WHITE CLOUD and BLACK CLOUD [petrified] : Yes . . . Master!

WHITE CLOUD [whispering] : Black Cloud. Our Master has spoken. You run down and see.

BLACK CLOUD: Oh, not me.

WHITE CLOUD: Yes, go.

BLACK CLOUD: Aren't you senior monk?

WHITE CLOUD: I am. What of it?

BLACK CLOUD: Don't you remember the feast at New Year's. Did I go and eat first? Or did you go and eat first?

WHITE CLOUD: It was New Year's. Obviously I went first. What of it?

BLACK CLOUD: Obviously you go and see first. That's what. You should go.

WHITE CLOUD: How can you talk about feasts and ghosts in the same breath?

Since I'm your senior, you should do what I say.

BLACK CLOUD: Really? Every other time it's "I'm your senior, I'm your senior, I go first," isn't it? You go first this time.

WHITE CLOUD [*exasperated*] : Will you go?

BLACK CLOUD [*waving him away*] : After you.

WHITE CLOUD: Will you go I tell you!

BLACK CLOUD: You go, you!

WHITE CLOUD: Dunce! Should I thump your head in?

BLACK CLOUD: I'll thump yours back!

[*They raise their fists to pummel each other. NARUKAMI, beginning to get angry, interrupts.*]

NARUKAMI: Monks. What are you doing?

WHITE CLOUD [*lamely*] : Ahh . . . coming across a turnip, I thought I would mash it up and offer it most respectfully to you, Master.

NARUKAMI: Imbecile. What else should I expect from you. And what do you say?

BLACK CLOUD: Finding this Chinese sweet potato I thought I'd cut it up and bake it for Master's dinner.

[*They raise their fists to their foreheads and bow.*]

NARUKAMI: You are both fools.

WHITE CLOUD and BLACK CLOUD [*bowing*] : Yes, Master.

NARUKAMI: Enough quarreling. Go at once.

WHITE CLOUD and BLACK CLOUD [*bowing lower*] : Yes, Master.

[*Shamisen play Haru wa Hanami. The monks rise and start to move right.*]

WHITE CLOUD [*turning back*] : I was ready to go before. Really, I would have gone, but you had to make a fuss.

BLACK CLOUD: You didn't think I'd have let you go alone, did you? I would have gone with you. [Peers ahead.] Oh, isn't it creepy? You go ahead.

WHITE CLOUD [*waving him to pass*] : You go first.

BLACK CLOUD: No, you go first.

WHITE CLOUD: Go on, go on, I tell you.

BLACK CLOUD: I'll follow.

NARUKAMI [*rumbling*] : Will you two go!

WHITE CLOUD and BLACK CLOUD [*wailing*] : Yeeesss!

[*They cautiously step forward, tiptoeing out of fright. They bend forward to peer ahead. They fall back, astonished by TAEMA's beauty.*]

WHITE CLOUD: Fantastic! I've never seen anything so beautiful!

BLACK CLOUD: First class! Super grade A number one!²³

23. Black Cloud rates her *jōjōkichi*, the top ranking for a kabuki actor.

WHITE CLOUD: But . . . what do you suppose it can be?
BLACK CLOUD: Have you gone insane? It's a woman.
WHITE CLOUD: I know it's a woman, but what kind? I think she's not a human being.

BLACK CLOUD: I think you're right.
WHITE CLOUD: Then what is she?
BLACK CLOUD [*thinks*]: Do I know who she is?
WHITE CLOUD: Yes?

BLACK CLOUD [*almost swooning*]: She's an angel!

WHITE CLOUD: An angel? Why?
BLACK CLOUD: That beautiful creature is an angel. And do you see the robe over her arm? It's a robe of angel's feathers she's brought here to wash because our Master's spells have dried up all the water in the whole world.²⁴

WHITE CLOUD: Weak head, weak eyes. She's a dragon princess.
BLACK CLOUD: Why do you say a dragon princess?
WHITE CLOUD: Because, you see, the incantations of our Master have dried the seas, the rivers, and the land until there is no place for a princess of the Dragon God of Rain to dwell, except this waterfall which happens to be the only water left on earth. She's come to join her family here. There is no doubt: she is a princess of the Dragon God of Rain!

BLACK CLOUD: That's bunk, monk. Whales don't have scales, but a dragon god princess does—and I don't see any. I don't see clams hanging from her sleeves. I don't see her getting seaweed plastered in her hair. [*Snickers.*] In front of the Master I said getting plastered! Look at her, she's exquisite! She's heavenly!

WHITE CLOUD: I tell you she is a princess of the Dragon God of Rain!
BLACK CLOUD: And I tell you she is an angel who has come from heaven!

WHITE CLOUD: She is a princess!

BLACK CLOUD: She is an angel!

WHITE CLOUD: Princess!

BLACK CLOUD: Angel!

WHITE CLOUD: Junior monk, you are contradicting your senior!

BLACK CLOUD: It's a free country, isn't it?

WHITE CLOUD: Ohhh! I'll thrash you within an inch of your life!

BLACK CLOUD [*mimicking*]: Ohhh! I'll put you in the hospital and you can foot the bill!

WHITE CLOUD and BLACK CLOUD: You! You!!

[*They raise their fists to fight. Music stops.*]

NARUKAMI: Silence. Since you will not obey, you shall sit and observe meditation.

WHITE CLOUD and BLACK CLOUD: We obey your command, Master Narukami.

NARUKAMI: Then do so. I shall see for myself.

24. Alluding to the feather cloak (*hagoromo*) of the celestial beauty who comes to earth and is forced to dance to have it returned, an incident dramatized in the *nō* play *Hagoromo*.

[Sheepishly they sit beside the platform and take out their rosaries. No drums play Itchō, "Single Rhytm," NARUKAMI rises and looks toward TAEMA. He rests his hand on a pillar of the pavilion and calls.]

You there! You there! [She does not respond.] I don't understand.

Standing before the craggy waterfall, having passed over a mountain trail difficult even for beasts of prey or birds, seems to be an aristocratic female form. How uncanny. [Sternly.] What are you?

TAEMA [helplessly] : I . . . Sir?

WHITE CLOUD and BLACK CLOUD [simpering, mimicking her] : I . . . Sir?

NARUKAMI: Silence.

WHITE CLOUD and BLACK CLOUD: Yes, Master.

NARUKAMI [firmly] : I am speaking to you.

TAEMA [lowers her head pathetically] : I am a woman living at the foot of the distant mountain, who has been parted from her dearest husband, Sir.

NARUKAMI: Parted from your husband?

TAEMA [pretending to weep] : Yes, your Reverence.

NARUKAMI: Parted and living, or parted in death?

TAEMA: Ah! This is the seventh day of the seventh week.

NARUKAMI [somberly] : The forty-ninth day of death?

TAEMA: Yes, your Reverence.

NARUKAMI [raising the rosary to his forehead] : "Namu Amida Butsu."

Buddha Merciful All Hail, Buddha Merciful All Hail.²⁵

[Kodama drum pattern creates a lonely mood. TAEMA looks bashfully at NARUKAMI, then holds out the black robe for him to see.]

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TAEMA: "Though once a keepsake, you are now an enemy I must abandon; can I then perhaps begin to hope for forgetfulness."²⁶ And so I had thought to wash from this rough robe the dust of carnal life, yet the drought is everywhere, wells are dry, streams have stopped. I had heard of a waterfall in the venerable mountain where, in spite of drought, water miraculously never ceases flowing. [Glances innocently at NARUKAMI.] I only wish to cleanse away past carnal memories, so I can begin . . . life anew. [She looks at the robe and pretends to weep.] Enchanting husband. I miss you so. Can you guess what thought fills my heart? [He does not understand what is happening, but he cannot take his eyes from her.]

NARUKAMI: What a pitiful tale. It would appear you were close to him during your marriage?

TAEMA [provocatively] : He and I were very close. In heaven, like two proverbial birds, sharing one eye and one wing, inseparable. On earth, two trees with branches intertwined.²⁷ [Smiles secretly.] When I think back on it, so many interesting things occurred.

25. A Buddhist memorial service is held for the dead on the forty-ninth day after death.

26. A poem from the *Kokinshū*.

27. From the *Chōgonka*, a collection of poems by Hakurakuten (772–846), a Chinese writer greatly admired at the Heian court.

NARUKAMI [*piously*] : The road to salvation begins from carnal desire. Each word exchanged with this woman is ordained by Karma. Repent your unforgivable sins for his sake in the next life. I will hear your confession! [He grasps the rosary in both hands and gazes intently at her. She meets his gaze, then modestly looks away.]

TAEMA: If I speak, it would lighten the pain in my heart. [She delicately touches her breast and looks at him.] Should I speak?

NARUKAMI: Speak! Speak!

TAEMA [*rising briskly*] : Very well, I shall speak. And yet . . . it is so very far from here to where you are, the words I speak will not reach you in these echoing mountains. [Pouting.] I want to be near your side when I tell my story.

NARUKAMI [*catching his breath*] : True. Your voice mingles with the water's roar and is hard to hear. You shall approach. Come near! Come near! [He makes a sweeping gesture for her to approach.]

TAEMA: Then, I will . . . come close to your Reverence's side.

[The large drum beats steady Taki Oto waterfall pattern. She moves quickly toward NARUKAMI, as her STAGE ASSISTANT goes off with stool and hand properties. WHITE CLOUD and BLACK CLOUD run to stop her, clucking and waving their arms.]

BLACK CLOUD: You mustn't, you mustn't.

WHITE CLOUD: By our Master's orders women are forbidden . . .

BLACK CLOUD: . . . within seven miles.²⁸

WHITE CLOUD and BLACK CLOUD: Within seven miles you cannot go.

WHITE CLOUD: One and one make two.

BLACK CLOUD: And two can make three.

WHITE CLOUD: Women are abomination.

BLACK CLOUD: Sinful beyond words.

WHITE CLOUD: All hail the abacus. Click, click, add it up. One plus one makes three. [He mimes counting with the beads of an abacus.] It doesn't square.

BLACK CLOUD [*mimes ringing a prayer bell*] : Ding, ding.

WHITE CLOUD: Ding, ding, ding.

BLACK CLOUD: Out she goes.

[They block her way on either side, grinning foolishly.]

TAEMA [*seeming to be bewildered*] : My, you say such strange things.

NARUKAMI [*considers*] : They are right to say them. No woman may approach my seat of meditation. Hmm. You shall sit with my monks close by on either side and speak. Speak!

TAEMA: Very well, your Reverence. I will tell my story here.

[She gestures magnanimously for them to sit. Covering their faces to hide their embarrassment, they kneel. Purposely delaying her story, she turns upstage while a STAGE ASSISTANT, dressed in formal kimono and outer garb, takes her sandals and the black robe. She turns coquettishly to the monks.]

28. A Buddhist holy place was to be kept undefiled for "seven miles in four directions."

My two monks, will you listen, too?

NARUKAMI [*impatiently*] : If they do, will you speak?

WHITE CLOUD and BLACK CLOUD: We will, we will.

[*The monks put away their rosaries and look at her expectantly. She kneels between them and takes out a small black fan, partially covering her face with it. She poses alluringly. Shamisen play Chigusa love music and tinkling bells join in. She tells them her story hesitantly, with a great deal of seemingly innocent, but suggestive, pantomime, as if NARUKAMI were not there.*]

shikatabanashi TAEMA: I am embarrassed to say it, but I fell passionately in love with my lord not very long ago. It was in the middle of March last year. I had gone cherry-blossom viewing at Kiyomizu Temple, when a young lord, scarcely more than twenty, suddenly rose outside our canopy and peeked in at me, sitting inside our silken walls. [*Miming the action.*] How can I describe his nobility, his sweetness, in words? [*Behind the fan.*] Instantly, I knew this young lord was to be . . . my beloved.

WHITE CLOUD [*open-mouthed*] : Though you'd never seen him before?

TAEMA: Ah, his sweetness was such that, truly, from the nape of my neck . . .

[*Showing the nape of her neck, she leans toward him.*]

WHITE CLOUD: . . . a shudder?

TAEMA: A tremor went through my body.

BLACK CLOUD: You quivered?

TAEMA: I trembled. I turned hot. [*She fans herself.*] I turned cold. [*She hugs her breasts.*]

WHITE CLOUD: Ohh! I can't bear it!

[*The monks hug their chests, imagining the scene.*]

TAEMA: Then this young noble began to tease. First he seemed to be gazing at my face from afar, then he was not. [*Pretending to pout, she puts the fan away.*]

WHITE CLOUD: Was it delicious? Was it delicious?

BLACK CLOUD: Was it like eating sweet rice buns and honey?

TAEMA: My lord then took a fold of letter paper from his breast, dipped a writing brush in black ink, and quickly composed a poem which he ordered my serving maid to deliver.

[*Dipping her finger in ink, she mimes writing on the closed fan.*]

WHITE CLOUD and BLACK CLOUD [*eagerly*] : Did he write well? Did he write well?

TAEMA: Oh, he did. He did. The poem he wrote was very interesting.

WHITE CLOUD and BLACK CLOUD: Yes? The poem?

waka TAEMA [*"reading" from the fan*] : "Still yearning to see, one whom I have not really, seen nor have not seen . . ."

WHITE CLOUD: "Still yearning to see . . ."

BLACK CLOUD: . . . one whom I have not really . . .

WHITE CLOUD and BLACK CLOUD: . . . seen nor have not seen?"

TAEMA: Ahh! How did the last half of his poem go?

[*As she had hoped, NARUKAMI's interest is aroused. He looks at her for the first time during the story. Music stops.*]

WHITE CLOUD [stricken] : Is this a thing you could forget?

BLACK CLOUD: If you'd written it on a plaque you could have stuffed it in your sash.

TAEMA [pretending to think] : "Still yearning to see, one whom I have not really, seen nor have not seen . . ."

NARUKAMI [pleased with himself] : "Can I live this way today, idly passing the time," is the last half of the poem, is it not?²⁹

[She claps her hand to her breast and looks at him as if he had said the most clever thing in the world.]

TAEMA: Ohh! That is absolutely right!

[The ambiguity of her response does not escape NARUKAMI. He gasps.]

NARUKAMI [thickly] : And then? And then? What . . . what!

[With a flourish, he pulls a small writing table before him, plants his elbows on it, rests his chin in his hands, and poses in mie, gazing fixedly at her. He holds the pose as she continues. Shamisen change to faster Nanakusa. The tempo of the story increases.]

TAEMA [back to the monks] : Why, you can't imagine how interesting it then became.

WHITE CLOUD and BLACK CLOUD: Oh, we can, we can!

TAEMA [brightly] : Well then I called my maid. "Go ask his name," I said.

WHITE CLOUD and BLACK CLOUD [eyes popping] : Did he say, did he say?

TAEMA: Hateful man, he didn't say.

WHITE CLOUD and BLACK CLOUD [clapping their hands to their cheeks in mock aggravation] : Holy Buddha! Holy Buddha! [They foolishly rub their rosaries.] Hail the Glory of the Lotus Sutra!

TAEMA: Exactly: I recited the Fumon verse of the Lotus Sutra.³⁰ The charity of the Goddess of Mercy is a miraculous thing. That night, when others were asleep, I rose and found myself being guided, alone, to the middle of Saga Plain, where, I found, he lived.

WHITE CLOUD and BLACK CLOUD: Brave lady, brave lady!

TAEMA [drawing back in fright] : But then, I came to a broad river.

WHITE CLOUD: Naturally, naturally. The Big Dam River. The Cinnamon Tree River.

BLACK CLOUD [snickering] : A famous river.

TAEMA: Of course I wanted to cross, but there was no bridge, no ferry.

[She mimes searching helplessly. Then she slaps her thigh in resolve.]

Since there was no other way, I fixed my courage and crossed the river at night by the light of the stars. As a woman, I did a dauntless thing.

Without thinking, I took my skirt . . .

[She rises. Ostensibly turning away from the monks, but actually turning toward NARUKAMI, she delicately lifts the hem of her kimono to show a few inches of ankle. He starts and gazes in fascination. He pushes the table

29. The poem is from the *Kokinshū* and is by Ariwara Narihira (833–880), one of the Six Great Poets of the Heian court. A man of Narukami's background could be expected to know it.

30. The twenty-fifth verse of the Lotus Sutra. It invokes Kannon Bosatsu, Goddess of Mercy.

away, grasping the rosary in both hands for support. She turns away as if embarrassed.]

WHITE CLOUD and BLACK CLOUD: You edged it up? You edged it up?

TAEMA: Not edge at all. I grasped it firmly and lifted it, entering the middle of the stream.

[She is holding the kimono at thigh level. Lifting it with a jerk, as if by accident the front of the kimono opens in NARUKAMI's direction. He grasps the rosary harder. TAEMA and the monks now speak with obvious double meaning.]

WHITE CLOUD and BLACK CLOUD: Brrr? Wasn't it cold?

TAEMA: Without a qualm, I splashed in. Splash, splash.

[She raises the kimono and shows her leg each step she wades seductively through the river. The monks raise their kimonos and in turn each mimics her. They parade in a circle.]

WHITE CLOUD: Splash, splash.

BLACK CLOUD: Splash, splash.

[All three wade in unison, the monks simpering and giggling. The water gets deeper, their steps slow.]

ALL: Splash, splash, splash. Splash. Splash.

WHITE CLOUD [as if in ecstasy, wagging his hips] : Oh! Deep! Deep!

BLACK CLOUD [on tiptoe] : I can't reach the bottom!

TAEMA [adjusts her skirt and kneels] : In time I reached the bank.

WHITE CLOUD [sitting, grinning fatuously] : Oh, damp, damp!

[The monks wring out their kimono bottoms. She poses and speaks with deliberate intonation, so that NARUKAMI cannot misunderstand her meaning.]

TAEMA: Though in the past I had disliked the slightest moistness caused by dew or love, now I pushed aside the short grass surrounding the small house in which my lord dwelled.

WHITE CLOUD and BLACK CLOUD [weakly] : Did you reach your destination?

TAEMA: When I quickly pushed open his rough gate and instantly entered, my lord said, "Ah! You have come!" [She places her hand on WHITE CLOUD's thigh.] He took my hand. [She takes BLACK CLOUD's hand.] And led me straight to bed. [She looks down modestly.]

WHITE CLOUD [falling backward] : Rapture! I melt!

BLACK CLOUD [holding his hands over his lap] : I don't know about you, but I'm as stiff as a log!

TAEMA [demurely] : We exchanged intimate stories. We burned incense and we drank sake. We hugged and tumbled, tumbled and hugged. Becoming unruly in our passion, we ended having a lover's quarrel. [Miming both lovers.] "Oh, stop it." "What if I don't?" "I'll pinch you." [She pinches WHITE CLOUD.] "I'll hit you." "Just try it once." "Well, I will," I said, and hit my lord on the head.

[She slaps their bald heads. They hold their heads and wail.]

WHITE CLOUD and BLACK CLOUD: Wah! Wah!

NARUKAMI [entranced, he rises and poses with one foot on the top step] :

And then. And then. Yes . . . what then?

TAEMA [*rising on her knees, miming*] : Very soon our quarrel grew heated.

"I'll leave." "No, you will not leave." "I shall if I want," I said as I rose to go. He grasped my sleeve. "You are too heartless," he said. "Try to stop me if you want; I must leave." "No, stay." "Goodbye," I pulled my sleeve and broke away . . .

[NARUKAMI is pulled, like the lover, toward TAEMA: he takes two steps forward, sways, and, to loud Yama Oroshi mountain storm pattern and batan tsuke beats, falls down the steps unconscious. He lies huddled on the ground. The monks rush to either side of him.]

WHITE CLOUD: Master! Master!

BLACK CLOUD: Master has fainted!

WHITE CLOUD and BLACK CLOUD [*waving their arms helplessly*] : Master, Master!

TAEMA [*innocently*] : Dear Reverend.

[The monks lift NARUKAMI to a sitting position. TAEMA hesitates, then rushes to the waterfall, as the large drum loudly beats Taki Oto waterfall pattern.]

WHITE CLOUD [on NARUKAMI's right] : Ahh! His whole body . . .

BLACK CLOUD [on his left] . . . has grown cold.

[TAEMA mimes dipping up water with her long kimono sleeve. She rises to bring it to NARUKAMI, but it spills. She puts her face into the water, rises, and buries to NARUKAMI. She kneels beside him and, placing her lips against his, gives him the water. She massages his breast gently. The monks gasp. Feigning embarrassment, she backs away and kneels with her face to the ground. Music stops.]

TAEMA [*softly*] : My Saint, my Saint.

NARUKAMI [*suddenly opens his eyes, his face unbelieving*] : Companion monks?

WHITE CLOUD: Praise to Buddha . . .

BLACK CLOUD: . . . Master has revived.

NARUKAMI: Something not of priestly nature has occurred. Engrossed without knowing it by the woman's tale, I fell unconscious from my seat of meditation. Yet, though my senses had fled, I think I felt a cool drop of water enter my mouth and revive me.

TAEMA [*modestly*] : Yes, it happened. From my mouth to yours, I transferred water from the stream.

NARUKAMI [*looks wonderingly at her*] : Ehh? Was the one who placed a drop of cool water on my lips . . . you?

TAEMA [*bowing*] : Yes, your Reverence.

NARUKAMI: And the one who pressed their flesh to mine to warm my breast . . . was you?

TAEMA [*bowing*] : Yes, your Reverence.

NARUKAMI [*considering*] : Hmm.

[Suddenly he leaps to his feet and strikes her to the ground. Drum beats Yama Oroshi mountain storm pattern loudly.]

Monks, watch her!

[NARUKAMI swiftly returns to the pavilion. He turns and glares savagely at her. The monks drop to their knees facing TAEMA.]

Ahh! Dangerous female!

[Music changes to Mizuki Sanju, "Moistness," played by shamisen.]

NARUKAMI speaks rapidly, rhythmically, with great force.]

In ancient times there was a priest in India from Benaras called the Holy One-Horned Wizard.³¹ Such was his wizardry he rode the clouds, he walked on water, until the day the Dragon Gods of Rain deluged the ground with endless downpour, when unthinkingly the Holy Hermit slipped and fell into a valley far below. Enraged, he cursed all the Dragon Gods living between the heavens and the seas, saying, "You caused the rain which caused the muddy earth to cast me down." With angry eyes the size of wagon wheels the Holy Wizard imprisoned all offending Gods of Rain. [Slowly.] He sealed them in a rock cave made magically inviolate by holy prayers hung upon a sacred rope. Drought seized the world, fields whirled with dust, everywhere the people suffered. Then the Emperor of that time conceived a plan by which the power of this Wizard would be destroyed. He called into his presence that lady of the court most perfect in countenance, Lady Sendara, and said to her, "Go to the grotto where the hermit dwells and with your sensual charms seduce this man so rain will fall." Vowing this, she sought him out, bewitched him with her sexual charms, and broke his secret spells. [More and more rapidly.] Black clouds filled the sky, rains deluged the land in torrents day and night, until, moistened, trees, grass, and the five grains came alive again. That silk-gowned woman drowned in lust a wizard of such power as he! Confess it, woman! Like her you are ordered by the Emperor to disrupt my meditation!

[Music fades to silence.]

kuriage

And the one who has instructed you can be no other master of occult arts than Abe Kiyoyuki! Well? Answer in absolute truth, or on this spot you shall be ripped to pieces and flung away! Well! Well! Speak!

[He glares fixedly at her, plants his right foot on the top step, whirls the rosary over his head in his left hand, and poses in a fierce mie to battari tsuke beats.]

TAEMA: Your suspicions overwhelm me. In truth it was my fondest dream to become your Reverence's disciple, but you allowed no one to approach. Then, distracted by your presence I told you of my intimate affairs. Now, since you doubt me, it is useless to go on living.

[She weeps pathetically, then suddenly rises and gestures distractedly toward the waterfall.]

I shall sink myself in the pool of the waterfall! May death vindicate my intentions! Yes!

[Drum loudly beats Taki Oto waterfall pattern. Pressing her hands to her breast dramatically, she rushes toward the falls.]

NARUKAMI: Stop her, monks!

31. The account is almost identical to that in book thirty-seven of the *Taiheiki* (ca. 1364–1374) and is undoubtedly from that source.

WHITE CLOUD and BLACK CLOUD: Yes, Master! Wait, please! Please, lady!

[*They seize her by the arms at the brink of the fall and bring her back.*]

TAEMA [*helplessly*]: No, no. Let me go. Please let me die.

[*She falls to her knees struggling, as they continue to hold her arms. Taki Oto fades away. NARUKAMI stands struck with admiration.*]

NARUKAMI: What impetuosity. In spite of once having sinned, your face radiates your true character. Admirable. [Gravely.] You must not die, for salvation does not lie in death.

TAEMA [*meekly*]: Yet, though I live . . .

NARUKAMI: Become a nun. Become a priestess.

TAEMA: Ehh?

[*She breaks away from the monks. They kneel to her right.*]

NARUKAMI [*warming to the subject*]: Narukami will administer your tonsure. You will become a disciple of Buddha.

TAEMA [*wide-eyed*]: Do you mean that I may receive the tonsure at your hands, becoming a pupil of your very own?

NARUKAMI: You may.

TAEMA: Can this be true?

NARUKAMI: Does Narukami speak lightly or tell lies?

[*He poses, proud and pleased with himself. She bows, making grateful, submissive little gestures as if overwhelmed by his masculine generosity.*]

TAEMA: Ohh! Master, I thank you from the depths of my heart.

WHITE CLOUD: Whew. I'm glad it's settled.

BLACK CLOUD [*grinning*]: So am I. Now when my habit tears I can get it sewn. We're in luck.

[*NARUKAMI draws a straw mat forward and sits cross-legged.*]

NARUKAMI: Monks, go down the mountain. Bring razor and comb for the tonsure, and return.

WHITE CLOUD and BLACK CLOUD [*apprehensively*]: What, go?

NARUKAMI [*glaring at them*]: You won't go?

WHITE CLOUD: We're going, we're going. But . . . it's getting dark.

BLACK CLOUD: Couldn't we go tomorrow?

NARUKAMI: Do you revere your master's words? You have said you will go. You should disappear.

WHITE CLOUD and BLACK CLOUD [*sighing*]: Yes, Master.

[*Drum beats quiet Taki Oto waterfall pattern. They rise and put on their sandals. Chattering and grumbling, they move toward the banamichi.*]

WHITE CLOUD: Disappear. Disappear. I can disappear. [Rhythmically.] But when we vanish, the Master . . .

BLACK CLOUD: . . . and that woman . . .

WHITE CLOUD and BLACK CLOUD [*turning back to look*]: . . . will be alone together!

NARUKAMI [*glowering*]: What?

[*The monks exchange knowing glances and grin foolishly. They puff out their cheeks, like a fat woman, and use girlish folk-dance gestures.*]

WHITE CLOUD: Goddess of Happiness! Goddess of Happiness!

BLACK CLOUD: Happy because she was . . .

WHITE CLOUD and BLACK CLOUD: . . . a priest's wife!³² Ha, ha, ha!

NARUKAMI: Rapscallions, both of you!

[They run laughing to seven-three. Drumming stops.]

WHITE CLOUD: Scold us as much as you want, Master is a snapping turtle
³³ . . .

BLACK CLOUD: . . . poking up . . .

WHITE CLOUD: . . . against the Lady!

[With closed fist, he gestures.]

BLACK CLOUD: Oh, Master!

WHITE CLOUD and BLACK CLOUD [salaciously] : Poke, poke! Paddle,
paddle!

[Large drum and bell play religious Zen no Tsutome, "Zen Prayer," as the CHORUS sings the folk song Zubonboe to lively shamisen accompaniment. One monk waves his arms weakly and pokes stupidly about, exploring with his head, miming a presumably old and lethargic turtle, as the other laughs and waggles his hips.]

CHORUS [singing offstage] :

Zubonbo ya! Poke, poke!

Zubonbo ya! Paddle, paddle!

How scandalous having as a mate,

An old turtle paddling in my pond.

Zubonbo ya!

[They laugh and point accusingly at NARUKAMI. They wave goodbye and dance off down the hanamichi as the audience applauds. Music stops.]

NARUKAMI: Foolish fellows! Detestable pair!

[She looks coyly up at him and bows very slowly.]

TAEMA: And now, my teacher . . . ?

NARUKAMI: Already you call me teacher. If I am your teacher, you must become my pupil. Maintain a pure heart, and soon you will be ordained a nun.

TAEMA [drawing back] : When they return with the razor, will you cut off all my hair?

NARUKAMI: You'll have a clean-shaven pate before you know it!

[She cries piteously. He looks bewildered.]

Why do you cry?

TAEMA [weakly, between sobs] : When I think my black hair, each strand of which I smoothed a thousand times, is to be cut and thrown away . . .

NARUKAMI [touched] : You weep in sorrow?

TAEMA: I do.

[Turning away, as if weeping, she thinks. Suddenly she rises on her knees and presses her fingers to her breast. She gasps and cries out in pain. She

32. A pun on the word *daikoku*, which means both "God of Fortune" and "priest's wife."

33. The snapping turtle as a metaphor for the male sex organ is found in popular songs of the period.

does this several times, as the large drum beats ominous Yama Oroshi mountain storm pattern.]

Ahh! Ahh! Ahhhh!

NARUKAMI: What is it? What is the matter?

TAEMA: The sorrow I feel has brought on a spasm . . . ahhh!

[She gasps pitifully and her body weaves from side to side. He stands helplessly by her.]

NARUKAMI: How dreadful. We don't have medicine. Ah! I could massage your back.

TAEMA: I am too much trouble, dear Master. *[She has another spasm.]*

NARUKAMI *[righteously]*: In case of sickness all barriers are cast aside. Here, now. Here, now.

[With naive self-righteousness he stands behind her and very properly rubs her shoulders. The drumming stops. Her cries subside. Silence.]

TAEMA *[tiny, innocent voice]*: There is pain in my abdomen.

nureba NARUKAMI: Ah, the source of pain must be in the pit of your solar plexus. I have the power to cure spasms by the laying on of hands. Here, now.

Here, now.

[As before, he approaches his task with utmost seriousness. He kneels, placing his left hand on her shoulder, and deliberately inserts his right hand into the breast of her kimono. He rubs a moment, then stops.]

Does that feel good? Am I reaching the seat of your distress?

share TAEMA *[innocently leans against him]*: Your kind hands touch my heart.

NARUKAMI *[rubbing]*: There, there. Is that better? Is it better?

[His hand goes deeper inside her kimono. Suddenly he starts, and falls back. He stands in amazement.]

TAEMA *[meekly]*: What have you done?

NARUKAMI: My . . . my hand touched a wonderful thing.

TAEMA *[innocently]*: And what was that?

NARUKAMI: For the first time since I was born, my hand has been inside a woman's kimono. There, on the middle of your chest, my hand touched something soft, like two pillows hanging down with little handpulls on the front.

TAEMA *[chiding]*: And you are called teacher? *[She hides her face as if embarrassed.]* They are breasts . . . your Reverence.

NARUKAMI *[genuinely surprised]*: Breasts? Is that so? The breasts to which

I was indebted when, as a child, I gratefully drank my mother's milk?

What is a monk, that he forgets such a thing as breasts? I am dull, like a wooden bridge.³⁴

[He strikes his head in wonder.]

TAEMA: Such purity is laudable, Master.

NARUKAMI: And now, I shall discover the source of your illness.

[No longer serious, he shows innocent delight in what he has discovered. She rises on her knees to be more accessible. He stands behind her, with

34. "To people he seems like a wooden bridge," in *Tsurezuregusa* (1330–1331) by Kenkō Hōshi.

feet planted widely apart, his hand in her kimono. He rubs with broad gestures, his face shining with joy. Their bodies sway from side to side.] Here now, here now. Ah, yes. Yes! Here are the breasts! How round and plump they are. [His hand goes lower.] Beneath them lies the stomach, cramped before it now lies soft to my touch. [Hand goes lower.] Next we reach the navel, Divine Seat of Life, Heaven's Center. [Hand goes lower.] Below Heaven's Center, the Sea of Seducing Vapors. [Hand goes lower.] Below the Sea of Seducing Vapors, Buddha's Pure Paradise! [He holds her tightly.] Is my touch pleasing?

[They pose. Although he does not move, we see through his face his transformation into a creature of raging lust. Finally he looks down at her. Still feigning innocence, she returns his gaze.]

TAEMA [scarcely audible voice] : Master . . . no more.

[With a choked cry he rubs her deliriously.]

NARUKAMI: Ahhh! I adore you! I worship you! My hope of reaching Buddha's Highest Paradise is gone. Only let me dwell in the bottom of the lowest level of heaven!³⁵

[He embraces her in both arms. She escapes and they both fall back onto the ground.]

TAEMA [feigning surprise] : Master. My Saint. What are you . . . ?

[He faces her on all fours, pleading. His voice is slow, harsh, almost unrecognizable.]

NARUKAMI: Would you say . . . I am mad?

TAEMA [carefully] : This is not your true nature.

NARUKAMI: Would you say . . . Buddha is offended?

TAEMA: You are a saintly monk who could not offend Buddha.

[He rushes to her, seizes her arm, and shakes it violently. She pulls away. He towers over her.]

NARUKAMI: I am damned! I am damned! Still living, but fallen into hell!

Though damned, though sinking, what do I care! What do I care! Buddha himself was first a mortal. He had a wife as Prince Shitta, he had children. Say yes! Say yes to me!

[He advances; she edges away trembling.]

Refuse me and I shall transform myself on this very spot into a devil! I shall devour that beautiful throat and carry you into hell with me!

[She buries her face in her kimono sleeve with a little cry. His face is tortured. His voice is terrible.]

Woman! Well! Well! What is . . . your . . . answer!!

TAEMA [pretending fear but actually toying with him] : My dear Saint . . .

NARUKAMI [pressing] : Do not refuse me!

TAEMA: Your Reverence . . .

NARUKAMI [voice rising to a scream] : Do not . . . refuse . . . me!

TAEMA [prolonging his agony as long as she can before speaking] : Yes, my Teacher.

35. The three levels of Buddhist paradise are each divided into three levels. Narukami had hoped to achieve the first level but now is content with the lowest, or ninth, level of salvation. Perhaps an erotic allusion as well.

NARUKAMI: Ahhh!

[*He collapses to the floor in relief. His lust evaporates and once more he is the naive and happy monk.*]

TAEMA [*chiding*] : Who ever walked the path of love with such a face as yours. It was frightening.

NARUKAMI: But . . . but will you?

TAEMA [*sweetly*] : If you want, I will.

NARUKAMI [*like an eager child*] : Death will be painless! To paradise!³⁶

Come, come!

[*He rises gleefully and takes her hand, pointing to the pavilion. Pretending coyness, she pulls him back. He kneels beside her.*]

TAEMA: You're in such a hurry. Tell me, dear Teacher, are you determined to make me your wife?

NARUKAMI: There is a rule for marriage: plunge headlong into the pool.

TAEMA: Come now, do wait a bit. If you want to marry, I will, but a monk for a husband is hateful. [*She turns away pouting.*]

NARUKAMI [*jovially*] : They say a monk is good medicine for beriberi.

TAEMA: Will you quit the priesthood if I ask?

NARUKAMI: I'll do it this minute.

TAEMA: You'll become a man?

NARUKAMI: And fix my hair in the latest fashion.

TAEMA: [*wheedling*] : Will you, honestly?

NARUKAMI: I swear by the Founder of Buddhism!

[*He holds the rosary up to his forehead. She flounces.*]

TAEMA: Hmph. That oath stinks of Buddha. And your noble name too, "Saint" Narukami . . .

NARUKAMI [*placating her*] : Now, now, I can change the name.

TAEMA: Change it? To . . . ?

NARUKAMI [*slaps down the rosary, and poses proudly*] : The lecher, Ichikawa Danjūrō!³⁷

[*She smiles, he laughs heartily at himself. The audience applauds.*]

TAEMA [*modestly*] : We will be a loving couple.

[*He takes both of her hands and rises.*]

NARUKAMI: Come, come, let's begin our play!

[*The audience laughs at the pun.*]

TAEMA [*shaking him off*] : Again, you want to rush so. Before we become a couple, I want to drink our betrothal cup of wine.

NARUKAMI [*agreeably*] : We will, we will. We'll drink the cup. We have wine.

TAEMA [*surprised*] : Ehh?

NARUKAMI: And we have a sake cup.

[*A bell tolls in the distance. Shamisen play Kin Aikata, "Bell Melody," in the background. NARUKAMI crosses up to the rocks by the pavilion and*

36. *Rendai*, "lotus platform," where the statue of Buddha stands. Lotus also implies paradise, in this case sexual bliss.

37. Ichikawa Danjūrō Sukebei. A pun on the word *sukebei* (lecher), not a proper name but sounding very much like one because its two characters are used in many common names (*Sukeroku*, *Gonsuke*, *Monnosuke*, *Shinbei*, *Sembei*, *Mambei*).

share

receives from a formally dressed STAGE ASSISTANT a red lacquered “cup,” almost twenty inches across, and a wooden cask of wine. Chuckling, he shows them to her.]

The little monks thought they could hide these from me by the waterfall, but I saw them.

[*He sits, placing cask and cup between them.*]

TAEMA: Wonderful. Wishes come true. [Picking up the cask.] Here, you shall drink first.

NARUKAMI [*protesting*]: No, no. I've heard the proper way is that the wife drinks first, then passes the cup to the husband.

TAEMA: What a clever thing to say.

NARUKAMI: Here, here. [He pours.]

TAEMA: Not too much, not too much. I drink to our two existences, now and in the future.

[*Daintily she drinks the wine in three sips, as prescribed in the wedding ritual, then passes the cup to him. She takes the cask, but he will not let her pour.*]

NARUKAMI: No, no.

TAEMA [*burst*]: Why not?

NARUKAMI [*embarrassed, blurts it out*]: I haven't touched a drop in my life. I even hate cucumbers pickled in wine.

TAEMA: It may have been all very well to abstain before, but when you take a wife it is proper that you should drink.

NARUKAMI: But if it's something I can't stand?

TAEMA [*turning away, piqued*]: When I tell you to drink, will you not drink?

NARUKAMI [*bows contritely*]: I will do it. I will do it.

TAEMA [*still angry*]: Leave me alone.

NARUKAMI: Fill my cup, please, while I say I was wrong. I was wrong.

[*Music stops. They ad-lib much chatter back and forth as she presses the wine on him and he hesitantly accepts. She pours more and more sake in the cup until it is full to the brim. He lifts it to drink but the smell turns his stomach. She sniffs disdainfully at him. He strikes a pose. Large drum beats ominous Doro-doro. He gathers his courage and buries his face in the cup, drinking without pause until it is drained. The painting of Fudo hanging in the altar of the pavilion burns and disappears. He sits up, gasping. His head reels.*]

TAEMA: How do you feel?

NARUKAMI: For the first time since I was born, I have drunk sake. My stomach has turned upside down. [He shivers and hugs himself.] I'm cold.

[*She moves behind him and provocatively puts her arms around his shoulders.*]

TAEMA: Soon you will grow hot, I promise.

NARUKAMI [*politely*]: I return the cup to you.

TAEMA: I don't want to hear “return” during our nuptials.

NARUKAMI: Then let us say “take back?”

TAEMA: “Take back” is even worse.

NARUKAMI [*bowing with exaggerated politeness*] : Well then, please accept this cup as an humble gift.

TAEMA: You shall drink in celebration.

[*Although he protests, she begins to refill the cup.*]

NARUKAMI [*feebley*] : I can drink no more.

TAEMA [*angry*] : Will you not do what I tell you?

NARUKAMI [*sheepishly, holding the cup to his forehead and bowing*] : Ah, ah! Fill it, I beg you.

TAEMA: That's better.

NARUKAMI: Pour it full to the brim.

[*She leans forward on her knees to pour. Suddenly she pulls back in fright.*]

TAEMA: Ahhh!

NARUKAMI: What is it?

TAEMA [*bands to her breast*] : In the middle of the cup . . . is a snake!

NARUKAMI [*laughing*] : What silliness. There is nothing . . .

TAEMA: There is.

NARUKAMI: . . . here. Look. [He looks and is startled.] Ah, I see. It's not a snake. That is the sacred rope.³⁸ See.

[*He stamps forward with his left foot and brings the cup near her. He points into the cup, then at the rope across the waterfall. With a great show of fear, she looks first into the cup then up at the straw rope.*]

TAEMA: Indeed, it is a sacred rope.

NARUKAMI [*laughing heartily*] : Ha, ha, ha! You are a timid one!

TAEMA [*casually*] : What kind of rope is it?

NARUKAMI [*proudly*] : That is a miraculous rope.

TAEMA: Oh. And why?

NARUKAMI: A secret too precious to be spoken to anyone!

TAEMA [*submissively*] : Ah.

[*She backs away, as if accepting his refusal, but from time to time she glances surreptitiously at the rope. He lifts and drains the enormous cup. Her display of timidity has made him feel masterful, and he abandons caution. He poses. A distant temple bell tolls. Shamisen play Kin Aikata softly in the background.*]

NARUKAMI: I nurse a hatred for the Emperor and have imprisoned all the Dragon Gods of the world in this grotto. [Bell tolls.] Hung with secret prayers, the sacred rope binds them.

[*He puts the cup down and on one elbow, feeling the effects of the wine, confides in her.*]

Cut the rope and escaping, the Dragon Gods will bring down floods and torrents of rain. Ha, ha, ha!

[*He falls over, laughing loudly. The bell tolls. He faces her on all fours.*]

Absolutely, do not speak of this.

TAEMA: If the rope is cut . . . will rain fall? How remarkable. Should I . . .

38. *Shime*, a braided straw rope symbolizing and ensuring purity in Shintō.

[She looks at the rope and almost rushes to it. The bell tolls. She catches herself and quickly picks up the wine cask.]

. . . pour more wine? Come.

[She overcomes his feeble protests and pours a full cup of wine. He gulps it down and sits in a blissful daze.]

NARUKAMI: Ah! “North Mountain Cherry” is the name of a famous play!³⁹

TAEMA [wheedling]: You must drink three cups for marriage. But don’t if you don’t like me.

NARUKAMI: I didn’t say I didn’t like . . .

[His voice fades off. He holds out the cup for her to fill, drains it, and falls over on his side. Music stops.]

Around and around . . . and . . . around . . .

TAEMA: Master Narukami.

[She helps him sit up. He rises unsteadily and takes her hand.]

NARUKAMI: Come.

TAEMA: Yes.

CHORUS [offstage, sings to shamisen accompaniment, indicating the passing of time]:

No sooner used to,

Our evening’s rain of pleasure, when the dawn of morning comes;

The sleeves of your sleeping robe, dampened in the morning mist.⁴⁰

[He leads her up the steps to the pavilion. She poses by the pillar, looking at the sacred rope. He draws her into his arms and they sink to the floor of the pavilion before the altar. He places a hand on her thigh. She leans against his chest. The blinds are lowered hiding them. A STAGE ASSISTANT clears away the cask and wine cup. Music ends.]

TAEMA [from inside the blind]: Master. Wake up. Please, Master. Wake up . . . wake . . . up . . .

[Her voice trails off. She knows he will not wake. A side blind is partially raised. The large drum beats Taki Oto waterfall pattern in a steady rhythm, gradually crescendoing through her scene. TAEMA slips out and rushes down to center stage. She kneels, facing the pavilion, and bows contritely.] Forgive me Narukami. I have been wicked. I did not want your fall, but it was our most gracious Emperor’s command. [She bows.] As I promised . . . I will break the spell.

[Shamisen and small drums play fast Ishidan, “Rock Steps.” TAEMA quails when she sees how high the rocks are. But she tries to climb the steep rock steps to the waterfall, to scattered batan tsuke beats. Her long court robe binders her and she trips again and again on the slippery rocks. Slowly she pulls herself up, using a creeping vine for support. At the top she poses to a roar of the large drum and battari tsuke beats. She kneels and unwraps a

39. The last part of the play’s full title, “Saint Narukami, the God Fudo, and North Mountain Cherry” (*Narukami Fudo Kitayamazakura*).

40. In waka form, except the third phrase is seven, rather than the usual five, syllables. “Rain,” “dampened,” and “mist” are engo related to lovemaking.

waka
share
engo

short dagger that she takes from her sash. She clasps her hands together in prayer. Music stops.]

Believing in the Three Jewels of Buddha⁴¹ and pressing my head to the ground, I pray to the Twelve Deities of Heaven, the twenty-five Benevolent Gods, and to the Eight Dragon Gods: let rain fall. Believing in the Three Jewels of Buddha, I press my head to the ground.

[*Taki Oto drum beats swell. She rushes forward to cut the rope with her dagger, but icy spray drives her back. Again and again she tries. At last she forces her way up to the rope and cuts it through, to battari tsuke beats. Flute and stick drum burst into Hayabue, "Quick Flute," and the large drum plays Ama Oto rain pattern. She falls back in fright as Dragon Gods, one after the other, escape up the falls. The next instant lightning flashes and there is a roar of thunder. To bata-bata tsuke beats she flees onto the hanamichi. She stumbles and falls at seven-three. Silence. She turns back and looks fearfully at the pavilion. Music resumes. She rises, pivots completely, to show her beauty, and, to deliberate bata-bata tsuke beats, moves elegantly down the hanamichi and off. Lightning flashes. The large drum beats Kaminari Oto thunder pattern. Loud bata-bata tsuke beats. WHITE CLOUD and BLACK CLOUD lead a dozen white-clad monks onto the two hanamichi. They fold their arms in their sleeves and try to protect their faces from the pouring rain. They call out as they run.]*

MONKS: Master! Saint Narukami!

[*The blinds of the pavilion are raised. In the dim light of the storm we can only make out that NARUKAMI is on his hands and knees, and that his head is down. WHITE CLOUD and BLACK CLOUD hurry up to the steps to greet him. The others remain stage right.]*

WHITE CLOUD [relieved]: Ah, Master, here you are. Here you are. Agh! He smells!

BLACK CLOUD [covering his nose]: He's been drinking wine!

MONKS: Ahh! Master!

[*They all notice the hanging ends of the rope. They gape and tremble.]*

WHITE CLOUD: Our Narukami's secret spell has been broken!

BLACK CLOUD: The sacred rope is cut, the Dragon Gods . . .

MONKS: . . . escaped and gone!

WHITE CLOUD: And so the rains . . .

MONKS: . . . come pouring down!

[*Large drum beats furious Ama Oto rain pattern. The monks tremble and hug themselves.]*

BLACK CLOUD: Lightning and thunder . . .

MONKS: . . . flash and roar!

[*Lightning flashes, Kaminari Oto thunder pattern swells. The monks fall to their knees, terrified.]*

Buddha save us! Buddha save us!

[*The sound rouses NARUKAMI. He moves, but his face cannot be seen.]*

NARUKAMI [fearsome, demonic voice]: What! It rains!

41. Buddha, the sutras, and the priesthood.

watarizerifu

MONKS [*clasping their rosaries*] : The rains pour!

[*Tremendous burst of Ama Oto rain pattern on the large drum.*]

NARUKAMI: What! It thunders!

MONKS: The thunder roars!

[*Roar of Kaminari Oto thunder pattern. Lightning flashes.*]

NARUKAMI: Why does the rain pour? [Ama Oto rain pattern.] Why does the thunder roar? [Kaminari thunder pattern and lightning.]

WHITE CLOUD [*rising*] : Because, dear Master, you were ruined by a woman just now.

BLACK CLOUD: We asked her name and where she fled.

THIRD MONK: She is Lady Taema of the Clouds . . .

FOURTH MONK: . . . most beautiful lady of the Court . . .

WHITE CLOUD: . . . by the Emperor's command, come to seduce . . .

MONKS: . . . our Master!

NARUKAMI [*terrible voice*] : Ehhh? The woman came to destroy my power?

Aghhh!

[*He lifts his head slowly during the speech. He is transformed; bold black and deep blue lines around his mouth and eyes have turned his face into a mask of ferocious evil. His head is topped with a great bush of black hair. With a cry he rips his rosary in two. He cocks his head, plants his right foot on the top step, flings his arms wide, and poses in a furious mie, to battari tsuke beats. The monks fall to the ground. Shamisen again play Mizuki Sanjū in the background. As NARUKAMI speaks, two monks and a STAGE ASSISTANT help him slip off his kimono top, revealing a white kimono with a jagged silver pattern representing lightning.*]

[*For each inch of good a foot of evil blocks our way! [He throws down the rosary.] The secret spells are shattered! I have transgressed Buddha's laws and incur Buddha's wrath! So be it then: I shall become a living Thunder God and pursue you, woman, to the ends of the earth! Hah, hah! How easy it will be!*

[*He rises majestically, towering over WHITE CLOUD and BLACK CLOUD. He hurls a sutra to the right, another to the left. They are accordion-folded and they flutter open into long streamers. Again the monks fall. NARUKAMI poses in a ferocious mie. The small curtain stage left drops to show the Ōzatsuma SINGER and shamisen PLAYER.*]⁴²

ŌZATSUMA SINGER [*accompanied by the shamisen*] :

Spirit of Thunder and Lightning, Narukami,

Concentrating mind and spirit, to search out,

To approach and overtake her.

[*WHITE CLOUD and BLACK CLOUD seize his arms and pull him first one way then the other. With a powerful gesture he throws them off; they fall, pulling out basting threads in his sleeves and a STAGE ASSISTANT pulls down his silver and white kimono top to reveal beneath it a third kimono, silver with a brilliant pattern of orange and yellow leaping flames repre-*

42. A form of narrative singing used in kabuki during the Genroku period and derived from Geki Bushi.

senting the power of lightning. The two terrified monks leap down from the pavilion to the ground below. NARUKAMI rips a sutra in half and throws both halves to the monks. Each holds an end as NARUKAMI poses in a mie to battari tsuke beats.]

NARUKAMI [fiercely] : East to Outer Beach in Ōshū!

[He tosses the other ends of the sutras to the monks and crosses to the pillar right.]

ŌZATSUMA SINGER: West to Demon Island in Chinzei!

[He wraps his left leg and both arms around the pillar, crosses his eyes, and poses in a hashiramaki, or “wrapped-around-a-pillar,” mie, to battari tsuke beats. A STAGE ASSISTANT spreads out the fallen kimono top behind him, to make the figure seem larger and more powerful.]

NARUKAMI: South to the Falls of Nachi in Kumano!

[He crosses to the pillar left.]

ŌZATSUMA SINGER: North as far as the Wild Sea of Echigo!⁴³

[He poses in an identical hashiramaki mie, with arms and legs wrapped around the pillar.]

NARUKAMI: To places no human ventures!

[Small drums and flute again play rapid Daishō. He takes the Diamond Scepter from the altar and, holding it over his head, leaps onto the main stage.⁴⁴ Brandishing it, he passes through the monks formed in two lines to batan and battari tsuke beats. The monks form a human platform center stage. NARUKAMI is lifted onto it. Raising both hands over his head and holding the scepter in his teeth, he poses in a mie, sleeves held out for effect by a STAGE ASSISTANT, to battari tsuke beats.]

ŌZATSUMA SINGER [slowly] : Go a thousand miles!

NARUKAMI [almost a scream] : Leap ten times a thousand miles!

tate

[Large drum plays Yama Oroshi mountain storm pattern as stick drum and flute resume music at a deliberate tempo. Batan and battari tsuke beats alternate, as the monks begin a stylized fight with NARUKAMI, attempting to restrain him. One at a time, the monks try to seize his arms, but he easily shrugs them off. He passes between them, brushing them to either side. They form a single line and try to push him back. He counters, forces them back two steps, then with a bravura gesture sends them falling like a string of dominoes. NARUKAMI mounts the rock steps and seizes the cut rope. He stands with his feet together, holding the rope over his head in his right hand, in a Fudō mie, to battari tsuke beats. He hurls the rope at the monks. One catches it and is bowled over. He hurls the other half of the rope and another monk rolls over catching it. A monk climbs the steps to halt NARUKAMI. He is flipped in a somersault off the platform onto the main stage. NARUKAMI rushes down and poses with his foot on the body. The monks rush forward protesting. A dummy is

43. The outer limits of Japan are described in these words in the *Soga Monogatari* (mid-fourteenth century). The same passage is used at the climax of another aragoto play, *Yanone* (The Arrowhead).

44. A short metal rod with bulging ends that is used as a weapon to quell evil, especially in Shingon Buddhism.

substituted for the prostrate body. NARUKAMI raises the dummy over his head. The monks fall back terrified. He hurls the dummy at them and it bounces from hand to hand, down the line of white figures and out of sight off left. To furious bata-bata tsuke beats, NARUKAMI rushes onto the banamichi.]

MONKS: Master! Master!

ŌZATSUMA SINGER: [elaborately ornamented vocal pattern to shamisen accompaniment] :

Indeed, the pursuing Narukami . . .

[At seven-three NARUKAMI turns back and glares at the monks. They fall to the ground shielding their faces. A sharp *ki clack*. NARUKAMI faces the audience.]

Follows in her footsteps!

[*Uchiage tsuke* beats gradually rise to a crescendo, fade away, then swell again, as NARUKAMI raises his arms high over his head, crosses his eyes, and poses in a *mie* to *battari tsuke* beats and loud beats of the large drum. He begins a powerful stylized exit. Glaring fiercely he pulls back one step, draws himself up, and leaps forward onto the left leg. Music changes to lively *Tobi Sari*, “Leaping Exit,” played by the large drum, stick drum, and flute. NARUKAMI holds the pose a long moment, then again pulls back, draws himself up, and leaps forward onto the right leg. Arms powerfully thrusting forward he leaps, at first slowly and with great deliberation, then gradually faster and faster, down the banamichi and out of sight to the sound of thundering drums and *bata-bata tsuke* beats. The audience applauds. The curtain is run closed. A *ki clack* signals drums and flute to play *Kata Shagiri* between acts.]

hikkomi

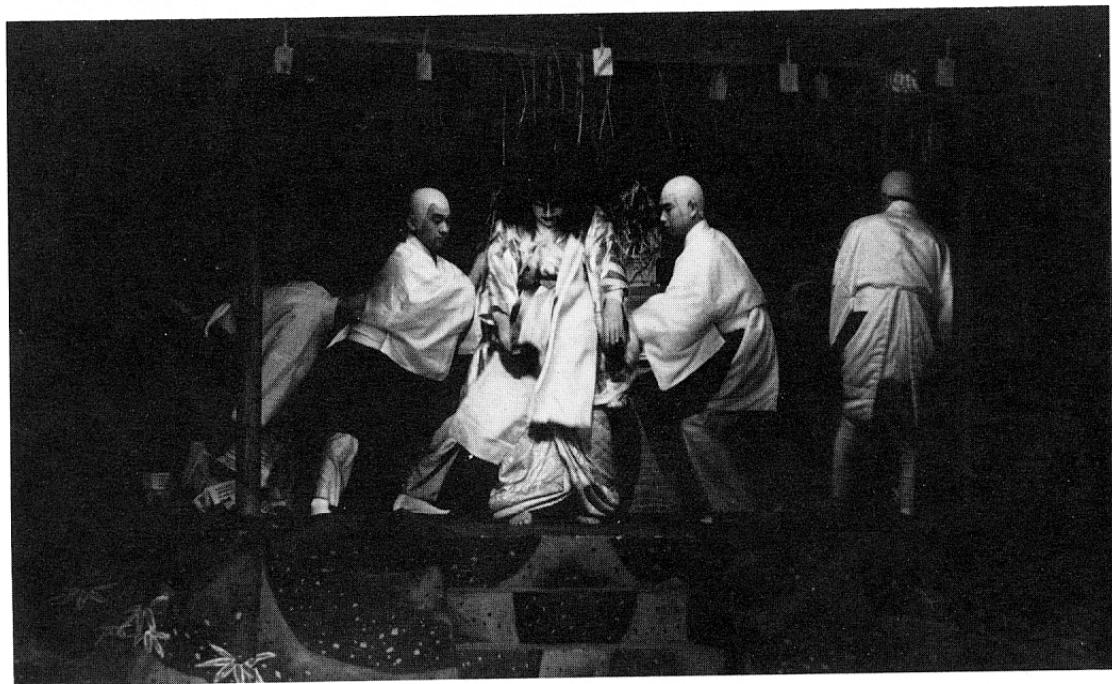
tobi roppo



Narukami innocently massages Taema's breast to relieve her pain. "I have the power to cure spasms by the laying on of hands. Here, now. Here, now. Does that feel good? Am I reaching the seat of your distress?" (*Narukami*: Onoe Shoroku; *Taema*: Nakamura Shikan) Page 150



"What silliness. There is nothing here. Look. It's not a snake. That is the sacred rope. See." (*Taema*: Nakamura Shikan; *Narukami*: Onoe Shoroku)
Page 154



Narukami begins his transformation into the Thunder God. His wig and makeup are changed. He drops his kimono top showing a white inner kimono woven with a lightning design. (*Narukami*: Onoe Shoroku)

Basting threads holding the sleeves of the white inner kimono are pulled out. The kimono top falls to reveal a third kimono embroidered with great orange, red, and yellow flame patterns. Page 157



To signify his abandonment of Buddhism, Narukami rips a sutra in two. He poses in a ferocious mie, holding the ends of the sutra as Stage Assistants lift the costume around him in order to increase his size. (*Narukami*: Onoe Shoroku) Page 158