

Child's Play is the perfect Coming-Of-Age story

In one of Ichiyo's best works, *Child's Play*, she portrays a story of children living next to the Yoshiwara district, a licensed pleasure district that allowed prostitution to be legal. The effect of this setting on the children's development throughout the story, specifically Midori and Nobu's developments, highlights the pains of growing up through the change in their behavior as they realize the inevitability of their fates while they journey into adulthood.

The first one to realize his path going into adulthood was Nobu. His family consisted of his father, the head priest at Ryuge Temple, his mother and his sister, Ohana. There was nothing about his family members or his upbringing to make Nobu reserved and taciturn, but he turned out that way anyways. Even if Nobu wanted to become something other than a priest, he knew that his family wouldn't have it: "His father's schemes, his mother's... to Nobu everything they did was a travesty. He had resigned himself to knowing they would never listen." (*Child's Play* p. 11) When Midori starts making friends with Nobu, it was Nobu's nature and self-consciousness that put distance between them, realizing his fate to be a priest like his father has been set in stone when others started commenting on his interactions with Midori: "If she goes to live at the temple, then she really will be Miss Daikoku.... That ought to suit a priest." (*Child's Play*, p.8) Nobu was the first to realize the inevitability of his fate, and the first to lose his innocence.

Midori, on the other hand, doesn't realize her fate until later in the story. She doesn't realize why Nobu distanced himself from her and was deeply hurt from it, despising Nobu and growing the distance between them. Everyone in town believed that Midori will follow in her sister's footsteps, and Midori even aspires to be like her sister, unaware of the implications of being an oiran: "Midori had no notion of what price Omaki might have paid to reign supreme in

her profession. To her it was all a game." (Child's play, p.9) This unawareness of what it's like to be courtesan played a factor on why Midori couldn't understand Nobu's actions.

This leads to the infamous rainy morning scene, the last scene where Nobu and Midori interact with each other. Nobu, breaking a strap in his sandal in front of Daikokuya hoping no one comes out of Daikokuya to help him, especially Midori. Midori wanting to tell off Nobu for everything he has done to her, couldn't because of her feelings for him, although she didn't know it at the time: "She didn't move, her heart throbbed. This was not the old Midori." (Child's Play, p. 14) This scene perfectly portrays the awkwardness between two adolescents and their relationship. Midori, despite how their relationship deteriorated, still tried to help Nobu by throwing some cloth for him. Nobu, watching her walk away and being moved by that one gesture, decides to not take the cloth and feels his heart break. Both of them longing for the other, not wanting to grow up just yet, but for an upcoming priest and an aspiring courtesan, it wouldn't be possible.

Midori finally starts to grow up the moment she realizes what it's like to be a courtesan, she hated everything associated with it, but came to accept that reality and it shows in her change in behavior: "She was forever blushing now... She was timid now, everything embarrassed her" (Child's play, p.17-18) Nobu starts to grow up as well, leaving for the seminary to become a monk. But a paper narcissus lay inside Midori's gate, described as: "perfect...yet almost sad in its crisp, solitary shape." In one last act before becoming an adult, Nobu expresses his feelings for Midori, knowing nothing will come out of it, showing the sacrifices and pains of one's path to adulthood.