

**Meeting and Parting and a Paper Dog
(Ronin Sakazuki)**

**by Masaki Domoto
translated by Don Kenny**

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**Kosaka Unme (KU)
Servant (S)
Todoroki Benemon (TB)**

(This play was written expressly for us by Masaki Domoto, a famed theatre critic and playwright, who states in several articles and introductory comments both for our own performance, as well as for a later performance by Mansaku and Mansai Nomura, for which Domoto had them ask our permission to present. Upon such occasions, he would always say that the reason he wrote the play for us was because Shichiro Ogawa was the only actor in all Japan who was capable of playing the role of Uemene without any makeup. The script was based upon the only extant record of a play from the transitional period from Kyogen to Kabuki, at the beginning of the Edo Period, around 1600.)

KU Hagi-yama is the house I serve. Kosaka Ueme is my name, born a samurai. My master's third daughter is yet a small child, but she is engaged to marry a young man who lives beyond the mountain. With each change of moon and flower, they exchange messages of love, and I am always chosen to deliver them. Thus I must proceed today down paths lined by tender leaves of early summer, to deliver one more letter from the little princess. First I'll call the chief foot servant. Here, here. Is the chief foot servant

in attendance?

S I attend you, Sir.

KU I am on my way to deliver a letter from the little princess to her betrothed. Choose men to accompany me.

S With all my heart.

KU As we must travel to the land of the future husband of our little princess, take care to choose those who are skilled at handling horses.

S I will indeed choose those whose appearance and skill are best.

KU Today our master has granted me the use of his own favorite young stallion. Bring him to me from the stables with the utmost care.

S This means that you are acting as a direct deputy for your master himself. I will dress the horse in his most colorful trappings. Please wait where you are for just a moment.

KU With all my heart.

S Do, do, do. No wonder our master treasures this as his most favorite stallion, for he has a fine, sleek coat and is a most excellent horse indeed. These purple trapping suit him very well. Here, your horse is ready, Sir.

KU What a fine horse he is. I will mount him now.

S I will hold him for you.

KU Oh, I have no hands.

S Why, you have two strong hands, with milk-white skin.

KU But in my left hand is the letter, and in my right is the paper dog.

S The paper dog.

KU It is a gift from our little princess to her betrothed. Take it.

S And what a charming gift it is.

KU (Mounting the horse and calming it.) Ha. Do, do, do. Do, Do, Do.

S The men I have chosen, each and every one, are ready to accompany you.

KU Thank you for accompanying me today. As we are to visit the betrothed of our little princess who lives beyond the mountain, take care to proceed in a respectful manner.

S Everyone says, Yes, Sir, indeed we will. (Clearing the way.) Shi, shi, shi.

KU There is no need to clear the way. Let us proceed with quiet dignity.

S It will be done as you say, Sir.

KU Do, do, do.

S What is the matter, Sir.

KU At the crossing is an old woman who stands block the way. Chase her away.

S Pardon, Sir, I did not see her. You, Old Woman there. Mind your manners. Move to the side.

KU Here, here. Don't speak so roughly. She is hard of hearing.

S She's gone now. The way is clear. No, she's still loafing about. Shi, shi, shi.

KU What a fuss you make. Can't you be a bit more quiet? Ah, perhaps if you carry the paper dog, and let the breezes cool your face, you will not be quite so hot-headed. Take it.

S Is this the way I should carry it?

KU You must walk straighter and with more pride.

S As you say, Sir.

KU Who is that I see?

S What is it, Sir?

KU I must have imagined it. (Singing.)

Cherry blossoms linger on the mountain,

Green Leaves blaze brightly in the sun.

Look, look at the woodsman,

His firewood bedecked with flowers.

How elegantly he makes his way

Down the mountainside.

It all reminds on of the great poet Robert Browning.

S What a noble, poetic mind resides in one so young. (Looking toward the mountain, singing.)

The one who rests beneath the flowers.

KU Oh, it is not the great poet Browning at all, but only a great brown cow.

S Brown, cow, brown cow, brown cow.

BOTH Brown cow, moo. Ha, ha, ha, ha.

KU (Singing.) Look, oh, look there, grazing in green meadows, feeding and lowing.

S (Singing.) Grazing in green meadows, feeding and lowing.

BOTH (Singing.)

Memories flood my poor heart, of one I treasured.

Shame and regret fill my heart at my own folly.

Shame and regret fill my heart at my own folly.

S Oh, look, look. On the branch of that tree sits a very fine hawk.

KU A fine hawk it is indeed.

S Our young master is a most ardent hawker. I'll catch it and take it back to him

KU Here, here. We are on a most important mission. We have no time for such frivolity.

S It is nothing. I am very good at catching hawks. Here, here, here.

KU Oh, watch your step. Be careful.

S Oh, what have I done. I dropped the paper dog in the the valley.

KU If only you had heeded my warning. Our princess is only a child, but she chose her gift with love and care. Go down into the

valley and bring it back.

S Yes, Sir.

KU What are you waiting for? There was once a fine man who was thrown out for no more than stepping on the young master's favorite cat. If I lose that paper dog, I will have to cut my stomach open. Get it quickly and bring it back..

TB Your paper dog, allow me the honor of retrieving.

S While you do deserve praise for bringing back the paper dog, you are wrong to kneel there with you head covered. Take off you hat and mind your manners.

KU Here, here. What are you saying? It is you who are wrong from the start, and now you dare to criticise one who sets things right. Just thank the heavens that you head is still on your shoulders and accept the paper dog. Oh, now it is I who am in the wrong. It is my place to accept the paper dog. (Kneeling in front of TB.) I know not who you may be, but for the efforts you have just exerted in bringing back the paper dog safe and free from harm, I thank you from the bottom of my heart. It is the House of Hagiyaama that I serve, and I am called Kosaka Uneme. As I am today on a most important mission, I wish to visit you later to express the depth of my gratitude. Thus I wish to know your name.

TB I am a man who has no name. But allow me to return to you this paper dog.

KU I accept it. (To S.) Take it.

S Yes, Sir.

TB Then I will be on my way.

KU Ah, wait. I must first know your name. (To S.) Stop him quickly.

S You heard what he said. Stop where you are.

KU Just look at yourself. You'll drop the paper dog again. Give it here.

TB And give me the letter.

S Oh, he has taken the letter. He is a thief.

TB I am no thief at all. I took it only because you endangered it. Master Kosaka, you must take more care in choosing your attendants.

KU I have heard that voice. And I am sure I know whose voice it is. You are (Striking his right thigh with his fan.) none other than my old companion Todoroki Benemon. How good it is to see you again. I blame you not for keeping on your hat, but I want to see your face. Please do not refuse me this. I am sure you are indeed Benemon, and it is I, Uneme, who asks this favor. Please take off your hat.

TB How amazing that you recognized me. I am indeed what remains of Benemon. (Taking off his hat.) Forgive my unsightly appearance.

KU Ah, Todoroki Benemon, how good it is to see you well.

TB Master Uneme, to find you in good health, and in a position of such honor is to me unbounded joy. (Bowing.)

KU (Bowing in return.) I thank you most sincerely.

TB In day past, (Both FF.) I enjoyed your favor, but such time has passed between that I am amazed that you still knew the sound of my voice, and that you recognized me. The depth of your kind thoughtfulness (Rising left hand to eyes.) moves me to tears. (Lowers hand.) I heard that you were to pass this way today. It is because I so longed to see your face that I hid myself beside the road to watch you go by. (Facing KU.) But I never expected things to come to this pass. (FF.) I was able to descend into the valley without a second thought, thanks to the training I received in the service of our master, the mountain magistrate, and the foresight of my parents (Bowing.) who apprenticed me to him. (Facing each other.) While I bowed in obeisance, with face to the ground, in front of the horse, of the master whose wrath I had incurred, afraid to show my face to you, I kept my hat upon my head. (Bowing.) I beg you to forgive my impudence.

KU As I set out today, (Both face paper dog.) bearing this paper dog. (Both FF.) I thought once more of you who incurred our master's wrath by stepping on the young master's favorite cat, of you have become a masterless wanderer, as I have each passing day since last we met, (Facing each other.) wondering what sort of life you lead.

TB Ah, what gracious words of sweet concern, my heart brims full of joy. (Both FF.) A masterless wanderer, my fires of morn and eve burn thin and wan. (Extending left hand and taking one step forward.) I beg for alms with songs I learned of yore. (Taking one step back.) Knowing full well how slim the hope may be, life goes on from day to day, with only your kind parting words, that our master's wrath would quickly cool, and the time for reinstatement would come soon. These words alone sustained my life until today. (Facing each other) And today you serve as messenger for the little princess. Since last we met on that fateful day, so many years ago, I have often thought how you must have grown. It was memories of the past that brought me to retrieve for you the paper dog. I shall treasure this day always as a

memory of fleeting joy in this transient world. And pray that you will always have health and success as you serve our master. I must not take more of your precious time, as much as I would like to. (Taking one step back and bowing.) And so I take my leave.

KU Please wait a moment more. (Mounting horse, FF.) This horse is the master's favorite stallion. On its back, I am a deputy (TB kneels.) of the master himself. I offer you a token cup of wine, in assurance that you will soon be forgiven and returned to your former position of honor. Accept you now this wine.

TB Haaa. With joy unbounded.

KU As I am on horseback, in the midst of a mission, I have no actual wine. All I have to offer is a token form of my good will. Receive the wine I pour.

TB I kneel to receive it.

KU Raise your cup and drink.

TB Though I am not accustomed to drinking wine, I gladly drink the depths of your good will. (Singing.)

**Todoroki takes the offered cup of wine,
Todoroki takes the offered cup of wine,
Three times he lifts it to his grateful lips.
Gaze upon his glory now, all you who pass by,
All of you who laughed at him for his asutere ways,
Look upon his joy and see, oh, see
How you must envy him now
For his happiness.**

KU (Singing.)

**How you must envy him now
For his happiness.**

TB (Singing.)

**Now the lords from all the lands and their great armies,
Gather round to bid farewell to their great master,
After which they turn and go back toward their homes.**

KU (Singing.)

Oh, how parting fills my heart with pain.

TB (Singing.)

**From sleeves all wet with fresh dew,
I brush the tears of parting.**

BOTH (Singing.)

**From sleeves all wet with fresh dew,
I brush the tears of parting.
I go on my way leaving regrets
As countless as the sands left on the seashore.
Oh, how painful is the parting sigh.**

TB (Singing.)

**As we go away on our separate ways,
When I turn to look back
On the face of one whose footsteps follow mine,
Reluctant to say the last farewell,
My sad heart draws me to turn back once more.
All I see, the way you went, the moon alone,
A waning, thin crescent.**

BOTH (Singing.)

Oh, how painful is the parting sigh.

TB (Speaking.) The wine of your good will has made me drunk indeed.

BOTH Fare you well, fare you well.

