

Nureki Chimuo's Talking Theater, Vol. 3

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2009.11.27

濡木痴夢男のおしゃべり芝居 第百九回

Nureki Chimuo's Talking Theater Chapter 109

葛飾怪異譚

Katsushika Tales of the Supernatural

Now, looking back on those days with a clear head, though whether one can truly be clear-headed about events from over sixty years ago is another matter, one simply cannot still hold onto the passion of that time. It seems to me that it was, after all, a mischievous act, almost a prank, intended to stave off boredom, especially on the part of the second daughter, Tamayo, among the three sisters.

But... but... for a mere distraction from boredom, I feel like there was something in that bewitching gaze directed at me. A fleeting glimmer of something else.

If that hadn't been there, I wouldn't have been so utterly captivated by her.

To this day, I still don't know what that light truly was.

Calling it love or infatuation would be simple and easy to understand, but it feels slightly different from those kinds of feelings.

I don't know.

Maybe it's okay not to know.

I don't understand my own feelings either. Why I was drawn so strongly to a woman five years older, of a different status?

That's right, at that time I was still a virgin.

Was it the reckless, single-minded love of a naive boy or simply an infatuation with the opposite sex?

No, rather than love or affection, it was ultimately the actions of a teenage boy driven by sexual desire for the opposite sex.

Back then, I thought I knew quite a bit about the world.

Even if someone were to say that such knowledge is merely the abstract understanding of a minor, I had repeated immersed myself in the works of [Jun'ichiro Tanazaki](#), read almost the entire collection of Meiji and Taisho literature, from [Homei Iwano](#) to [Shuko Chikamatsu](#), from [Katai Tayama](#) to [Shusei Tokuda](#), and even [Kafu Nagai](#).

Call it conceptual if you will, but I truly believed I understood both the romantic entanglements between men and women and the common sense of the world.

I stayed over at the sisters' room several times after that, but I was careful enough in my own way about coming and going.

When you opened the glass door at the front entrance of the Tsurukame Apartments, there was a large communal shoe rack for footwear on the right, and the stairs leading up to the second floor started right in front of it.

The Nishiki sisters' room was on the left side at the top of those stairs.

If I moved quickly, I could slip into the sisters' room without encountering anyone from the Tsurukame Theater dressing rooms or the second-floor residents.

On the second floor, there were five rooms to the left and four to the right.

All were small rooms, either six tatami mats or just one room of four and a half mats. The rooms on the left side got better sunlight.

There was no toilet, no kitchen, and of course no bath. Only a small closet was attached next to the entrance door.

Even so, for people who had lost their homes in the war, it was a welcome place to live.

At the end of the hallway were the shared toilet and kitchen with running water. The residents took turns using these facilities in their daily lives.

The sisters' parents lived in a six-mat room on the same left side, separated by two other rooms.

To be precise, it was their parents and their grandchild, the baby Hideyo had given birth to, who lived there.

The parents rarely showed their faces in their daughters' room. It was the daughters who frequently went in and out of their parents' room.

Their mother cooked all three meals, and the daughters went to their parents' room to eat.

They would leave some of that food behind, and Tamayo would secretly hide it and bring it to me. The three sisters were a tightly knit group of accomplices.

It was a time of food shortages, so we often ate brown cornmeal cakes or steamed bread.

It was the kind of food that would give you a stomachache if you didn't chew it well, but when it came from Tamayo's hands, it made me feel rich.

Still, what were those sisters thinking? Why did all three of them, in unison, hide me and let me stay like that?

For a game of adventure, it was far too dangerous under those circumstances.

What fun could they possibly have gotten out of keeping a young, half-baked guy like me, who wasn't even a proper actor, locked up in their room?

Since their family consisted of only women besides their father, maybe a man was a novelty. Maybe they wanted to keep a weak man like me, who would do anything they said, close by and play a little harmless prank on him.

It might be hard to believe, but there was absolutely no sexual contact between the sisters and me.

If someone were to say that sleeping with futons spread across the entire six-mat room, all four of us piled on top of each other, was itself sexual contact, I could only answer yes. But there was nothing like the blatant, lewd acts the adults of the world might imagine.

Twenty one year old Tamayo faced me with her usual bewitching smile, but she never, for instance, took my hand, embraced my body, or pressed her lips to mine.

Had she pressed herself against me like that, I wouldn't have run away or refused. I would surely have quietly submitted to whatever she did.

Nor did I ever initiate any such overt sexual acts toward Tamayo. Perhaps it would be fair to say I lacked the courage.

To be honest, I never once became aroused by Tamayo.

I never felt the urge to spread her legs and insert myself into her.

Was it because I was still sixteen and a virgin?

When I was far from Tamayo, I never fantasized about her breasts, her butt, or that bewitching face to stir my desire. Consequently, I never felt like masturbating. Even those thighs in the moonlight never became an object of self-pleasure.

I'll confess one more important thing.

I never conjured up images of "ropes" when it came to Tamayo.

I never felt the desire to tie her up, to bind her.

At that time, even though I was a virgin, I already possessed a clear, intense image of "rope" and "bondage."

Despite that, Tamayo and rope were worlds apart.

It's only natural that I felt no desire for masturbation when it came to Tamayo, who evoked no image of rope.

Why were Tamayo and rope so utterly disconnected within my sexual desire?

Even now, thinking about it, it remains a mystery.

I don't know the reason.

Truthfully, I intended to write while pondering this very point, hoping that as I wrote I might find a satisfying answer. But I still don't know.

From around fifteen or sixteen to the early twenties, even during the food shortages immediately after the war, this is the peak age for masturbation and sexual fantasies. It's a time of heightened arousal when even the knots in a wooden fence or the cracks in a wooden fish drum make you want to insert something.

So why, then, was Tamayo the only one who didn't become an object of that kind of image?

For example, something like this might be possible.

The beautiful three sisters of the Nishiki family are, in truth, no longer living human beings.

When the Meguro mansion was bombed by the American air force, every member of the Nishiki family was already dead.

Yet, by some twist of fate, they appeared as ghosts in this land of Katsushika and possessed Ichikawa Fukujiro.

No matter how beautiful or charming a woman may be, being a ghost, she has no substance.

And since they had no substance, they could not even become objects of the boy's masturbation fantasy...

Turning this into a ghost story would provide a conclusion, but that seems far too frivolous.

We mustn't be frivolous like this here.

Tamayo turned to me, her usual bewitching smile playing on her lips and said, "Please call me 'big sister.' Because I think of you as my little brother."

Even as a boy, I knew such lines were part of the art of seduction. I was an actor, after all.

The word "courtship" is practically obsolete now, so let's open a Japanese dictionary and confirm its meaning.

Kuzetsu (口説)... Words. Talk. Verbal sparring. A quarrel, especially a lovers' quarrel.

I see. Especially lovers' quarrels, huh.

While I'm at it, I'll look up 痴話 (sweet nothings) too.

"Chiwa (痴話)" Playful talk between sweethearts. Sweet nothings. By extension, an affair.

"Sweethearts" is a nice word, huh. So the relationship between Tamayo and Ichikawa Fukujiro is "sweetheart?" That makes sense.

I was intoxicated by those sweet, cloying words of courtship coming from the mouth of that coquettish beauty.

I thought of Tamayo with maddening intensity. When we couldn't meet, I writhed in anguish and agony. But thinking back now, I have no memory of touching her body. I never even held her hand.

Oh, Rakka-san. If I write such things, you will surely laugh at me. Or perhaps sneer.

"That can't be true," you'll say.

Right now, the moment I see you, I just want to touch your body.

Aware of others watching, you run away. I will chase.

Even just the tips of my fingers, I want to touch you.

Bare my desire, wanting to touch you.

But... but, sixty years ago, I couldn't touch you.

Was it because I was just a boy back then?

Or was it because I was timid?

No, I don't think that's it.

To say I couldn't bring myself to touch you because I was young, that would be too easy an answer. Far too easy.

There's no need to agonize over it like this.

I feel like the inexplicable nature of sex lies in that very place.

Once again I'm lost, and foolishly I start going around in circles.

2009.11.29

濡木痴夢男のおしゃべり芝居 第百十回

Nureki Chimuo's Talking Theater Chapter 110

性的快樂の「質」

The “Quality” of Sexual Pleasure

The stage at the Tsurukame Theater closes around nine o'clock at night. As soon as Master Fukunosuke returns to his dressing room, he removes his wig, takes off his costume, steps out into the hallway, and practically runs to the bathhouse.

He doesn't actually take a bath, he just removes his makeup at the sink.

Nakajima-san, his attendant, and I would fill a basin with hot water and help him scrub off the thick paste of white powder applied to the back of his collar with soap.

I would hold the raised sides of his dressing gown high behind him.

His own reflection appeared in the wall mirror of the dimly lit washroom.

There stood the figure of a devoted disciple serving his revered onnagata master.

Seeing that, at that moment alone, Fukunosuke and I became one and being the disciple of a beautiful actor filled me with a feeling of joy and pride.

Fukunosuke, having washed his face, had Nakajima-san assist him as he prepared to leave.

Even offstage, he wore a kimono at all times and the routine was fixed, so his preparations were dizzyingly quick.

Fukunosuke and Nakajima-san stepped out together from the Tsurukame Theater dressing room, that is, the entrance on the first floor of the Tsurukame apartment building.

I also finished getting ready to leave and followed them out. It was a send-off.

Outside it was dark. It was an era of scarce electricity, so there were no streetlights.

It was a five minute walk to Kameari Station on the Joban Line.

After nine o'clock, the streets were deserted, and the area in front of the station was quiet and dark.

Not a single shop had its lights on for business.

As Fukunosuke and Nakajima-san cross over to the platform for trains bound for Ueno, I stop just before the ticket gate and bow to them respectfully.

Fukunosuke gave a slight nod in acknowledgement, while Nakajima-san said, "Thank you for your hard work," acknowledging my seeing them off.

My home was in the opposite direction from theirs, so I pretended to head for the platform for trains going down, bound for Matsudo.

I only pretended. I didn't actually go onto the platform.

I immediately turned back toward the Tsurukame apartment building.

I gently opened the glass door at the entrance, took off my shoes, held them in my hand, and climbed the stairs to the second floor.

The hallway was dark. The doors to the shared toilets lined up at the end and the kitchen area next to them was so dark I couldn't see them.

Only one small light bulb illuminated the entire second-floor hallway. This darkness was my greatest ally.

Opening the door to the three sisters' room, I hunched my back and slipped quickly inside.

The thrill of those few seconds was, as always, exhilarating.

I always moved as nimbly as a mouse, and the sisters found it amusing, skillfully catching me.

That's why my intrusion never drew the attention of the second-floor residents.

Perhaps they only let me stay in their room to enjoy this thrill.

I had truly become a way for the sisters to pass the time back then, when they had nothing to do every day.

They would sneak food in for me, but for the bathroom I had to leave the room and carefully make my way to the toilet at the end of the hallway, making sure not to be seen.

Once, I tried to open the glass window and pee outside through it, but even that was stopped by Tamayo.

“Right below this window is Takenosuke-san’s dressing room. I think it’s okay since he’s not there at night, but please don’t do that.”

“I understand.”

It was night, so the residents were all asleep.

Even so, I was cautious. I listened for footsteps in the hallway, for the sound of doors opening and closing, making sure no one was there before I held my breath and went to the restroom.

The restroom was a single stall for both business and pleasure, and of course it was unisex.

If I sensed someone coming while I was in there, I held my breath and waited until they left.

Once the hallway was clear, I’d slip back out and quickly dive back into the sisters’ room.

I mentioned before there was no sexual contact, but with futons spread across the entire six-mat room and the three sisters sleeping piled on top of each other, there was no way my body wouldn’t touch theirs as I squeezed in.

Even if I had no sexual awareness, there I was, a sixteen year old stranger, sleeping all night long, rolling around and tossing and turning, surrounded by the bodies of women aged twenty-eight, twenty-one, and fifteen.

Objectively speaking, it’s no wonder that situation might have seemed to carry a sexual atmosphere.

To be more specific and explicit, we might have tangled limbs, embraced, kissed, groped each other’s crotches, or even experienced sexual pleasure equivalent to that of explicit acts, even without penetration into female genitalia, as was the common perception of men and women in that era. All four of us, each in our own way, might have savored that level of sexual pleasure.

No, I was different. No matter how hard I try to insist I had absolutely no such sexual awareness, perhaps it was actually present in my unconscious mind. No matter how hard I try to

insist that the only time I felt eroticism in this room was when I saw those thighs in the moonlight.

After all, we were raised in an era where, until just yesterday, we were subjected to militaristic education, forced to sing daily that no life was too precious to sacrifice for His Majesty the Emperor, where free interaction between men and women was deemed criminal, and where adultery, if discovered, meant going to prison.

Perhaps the three sisters and I were, at that very moment, in the midst of an unimaginable “sexual pleasure.”

And, to put it another way, was my existence at that time nothing more than a convenient “toy for sexual play” for the three sisters?

Thinking about it now, over sixty years later, I still feel that the quality of that “sexual pleasure” I felt back then was quite different from what I experience now.

We’ve become too “free” now.

When it comes to sex, we live in an era of excessive freedom.

Thanks to this freedom, no matter how intense or powerful the sexual act, I no longer feel profound pleasure.

To put it crudely and concretely, if pleasure means inserting a penis into a vagina and rubbing against each other all night long, then sometimes the sensation felt when the tips of fingers touch each other can be a stronger, more intense sexual pleasure than that.

So, was there truly some unimaginable, blissful sexual pleasure within those adventures my sisters and I conspired to play, becoming utterly absorbed in them?

There was, surely.

But then I think again.

I don’t remember getting an erection back then.

I never even thought about getting one.

That’s the strange part.

And this is part of the problem.

I also have no memory of fantasizing about their bodies and masturbating elsewhere.

I never even thought about doing such a thing.

Since I didn't get an erection, I didn't even think about masturbating.

Was my body simply immature as a man?

Or did I shrink back, intimidated by the multiple advances of three sisters?

No, that's not it.

I had quite normal, mature sexual desires towards women other than the sisters.

In other words, I fantasized about other women and diligently (?) vigorously (?) sometimes fiercely (laugh) engaged in masturbation.

For example, the female factory workers wearing hinomaru headbands at the weapons manufacturing plant where I worked until just four months ago, and the schoolgirls brought in en masse from their schools, were my subjects.

Their pitiful faces, smeared with machine oil, were tantalizingly erotic.

Their lower halves, clad in baggy monpe pants, completely hid the shape of their butts, but ironically, that only fueled my fantasies.

I was a conceptual pervert.

I would strip these women naked in my imagination and masturbate. I did it quite frequently.

But the Nishiki sisters never appeared in those fantasies.

The sisters were more beautiful, more coquettish, and even more erotic than any of the women working in the weapons factory.

It wasn't that I held them in such high regard that I couldn't touch them.

Yet, they never became the subject of my fantasies.

2009.12.1

濡木痴夢男のおしゃべり芝居 第百十一回

Nureki Chimuo's Talking Theater Chapter 111

劇団『東舞(とうぶ)』一日目

Theater Company "Tobu" Day One

The "sibling roleplay," or "adventure roleplay," or "romance roleplay" between Tamayo Nishiki and myself continued for several months in this feverish, dreamlike state.

Even if the theater people involved with the Tsurukame Theater find out about my actions like this, they're not exactly "respectable" folks themselves, so I suppose they'll cut me some slack.

However, if the parents of the three sisters or the "serious," respectable residents of the Tsurukame Apartments saw me, I'd be denounced immediately and ruined.

If any parent saw a young man sneaking into their three daughters' room, sprawled out sloppily with limbs exposed, sleeping haphazardly all night long, their blood would boil and they'd be furious, no question about it.

(Looking back now, even Hideyo, a young mother of twenty-eight with a baby, was part of that sleeping arrangement. That alone was extraordinary. Moreover, Hideyo's husband had been taken to the battlefield and was still missing in action, his fate unknown in a distant land.)

One day in early spring of 1946 (Showa 21), Tamayo sat before me with an unusually serious expression.

"Fukujiro-san, I have something to tell you. Please listen." Saying this, Tamayo firmly grasped both my hands with hers.

Her hands gripped mine tightly, her breath brushing my face, and my heart pounded wildly.

When she became serious, Tamayo's eyes shone with an even more bewitching, lustrous glow.

Like a lamb under a witch's spell, my limbs went limp and my mind went numb.

"I'm telling you this because I genuinely care about you, so please listen carefully. Fukujiro, you can't stay in this kind of theater troupe forever. Japan lost the war, and from now on we have no choice but to become a vassal state of America. Kabuki is finished. No matter how good the plays by Takejaku-san or Fukunosuke-san are, the audience simply won't come anymore. Kabuki is done for. I have a friend, Tomie Kadokawa, a leading actress with the Tobu Theater Company. I'll introduce you to her. You must go to Tobu and study diligently. You can't stay in this kind of theater forever."

Tamayo said this to me when the Takejaku troupe was performing "Gonsaburo and Sukeju" at the Heiwa Theater in Yotsugi, Katsushika Ward.

In the narrow dressing room, separated from the hanamichi by a single wooden wall, the troupe leader, Takejaku, muttered to Fukunosuke with a wry smile, "For some reason, whenever the audience numbers drop and the troupe is about to disband, we end up performing this 'Gonsaburo and Sukeju.'"

I remember feeling an overwhelming sense of unease when I heard that, and I shrank back.

Even our loyal patrons from the Honjo Kotobuki Theater days wouldn't take the Keisei train all the way out to Yotsugi.

The climax of "Gonsaburo and Sukeju."

On the white sand floor of the magistrate's office, lined up in a row, Takejaku as Gonsaburo, Fukunosuke as Sukeju. Takenosuke played Hikoemon, arrested for a crime he didn't commit.

Onoe Ootoy, playing the son Hikosaburo, sought to clear his father's name.

Kataoka Tobei was the real culprit, the villainous carpenter Kantaro.

Sawamura Tetsuzaburo played the magistrate Ooka Echizen-no-kami.

And then, playing the officials, Umezawa Hideo, Arisawa Kotaro, and Ichikawa Fukujiro, that is, me. Bando Chikujiro played the jailer who brought the prisoner out of the dungeon.

The audience watching the play was sparse and hollow, with the number of spectators almost equal to the number of actors performing on stage.

No matter how hard Takejaku tried to liven things up with amusing gestures and expressions, not a single laugh came from the audience.

Standing there, one hand gripping the end of the rope binding Kantaro, who was being dragged along, and the other holding a six foot staff, I heard, "That kind of play is over now." Tamayo's voice echoed back to me.

(Maybe I should go to the Tobu Theater, like she said, I thought.)

Yotsugi's Heiwa Theater was a daily flop. In those days, if it weren't for a woman named Tamayo, how lonely my days would have been.

I decided to follow Tamayo's advice and go to the "Tobu Theater."

"Please stop me," I said, kneeling in seiza. Fukunosuke, seated before the dressing room mirror, merely glanced at my reflection and nodded silently.

The attendant, Nakajima-san said, "You've worked hard. In times like these, it can't be helped," and looked a little sad.

I was taken by Tamayo to the rehearsal space of the theater troupe "Tobu."

They said everything had already been settled with Tomie Kadokawa.

Get off at Hamamatsucho Station on the National Railway.

A room inside a warehouse-like building near Shibadaimon was the rehearsal space for "Tobu" at that time.

When I opened the door, the rhythm of recorded music echoed, and a dozen or so young men and women were taking dance lessons.

Several women were wearing ballet practice wear, and I was overwhelmed by the glamorous atmosphere.

I was overwhelmed by the bright atmosphere, so different from the damp and stagnant Tsurukame Theater.

I sensed immediately that we were from different stations in life.

First, everyone was young. Their movements were sharp and lively, their expressions full of vitality.

Stepping into the room, I saw a huge mirror covering the entire left wall.

My whole body suddenly appeared reflected there, and I froze in my tracks.

One woman in the middle of her lesson spotted us and exclaimed, "Wow, Tamayo-chan, you're here!"

She held out both hands, waving her fingers as she approached.

Then, she suddenly threw her arms around Tamayo. The two hugged each other and bounced up and down like children.

This must be Tomie Kadokawa, I thought. She was a petite actress.

Tamayo introduced me to her.

"This is Toyoichi-san."

"Nice to meet you. I'm Kadokawa. Let's be friends."

That was the extent of the introductions.

I knew that "Tobu" was a prestigious theater company with a long history, great prestige, and considerable talent.

Joining such a distinguished company, especially with Tamayo Nishiki as my guarantor, felt like it required no audition or paperwork whatsoever.

However, I never did learn the nature of Tamayo's relationship with Tomie Kadokawa, or what connection the troupe had to her.

Tomie Kadokawa addressed me in a tone bordering on command, "Toyoichi, you join in too. Just as you are, take off your jacket. Stand at the very back and do exactly what the person in front does. If you don't move your body properly, your stage voice won't come out." she said.

There was no room for refusal.

Nodding at Tomie's words, Tamayo smiled. That smile encouraged me.

As instructed, I took off my jacket, handed it to Tamayo, and joined the lesson.

Tomie Kadokawa and Tamayo stood in a corner watching my movements, continuing to chat amiably about something.

This was my first day after joining the theater troupe "Tobu."

The next day, my entire body ached with muscle soreness, and I couldn't even bend down in the restroom.

It was because of that lesson I'd suddenly been made to do on Tomie's orders. The pain lasted about a week.

For me, it was a pain I'd never experienced before.

But even as I groaned and groaned, I felt something like hope within that pain.

I wish to state here the name "Tobu" for this theater company is a provisional title.

I want to write about myself honestly and straightforwardly.

I want to keep writing.

I am careful to not let it become a novel-like fabrication.

To that end, I want to write as honestly and truthfully as possible about the people I have interacted with. I want to write exactly what I felt.

But then, I worry that this might cause unexpected trouble for those people I've come into contact with. Even when writing carefully, trouble could arise at any time, in any way.

I want to avoid that.

I have had the unpleasant experience of having my past and present affairs, under the name Nureki Chimuo, written about in a funny and improper way in magazines and such.

I fear that my writing might cause others to experience that same unpleasant feeling.

(The reason I used pseudonyms for theater names like Tsurukame Theater and Shirahige Theater is the same.)

Some people find it troublesome simply because someone with a dubious sounding name like Nureki Chimuo was once close to them.

To those who think that way, I am indeed a dubious individual. I won't deny it.

I've even been confronted and berated face to face, "Aren't you ashamed to do such work?" And in front of a crowd, no less.

Some have even said that associating with me is a stain.

I'm not needlessly putting myself down. Nor am I reveling in paranoia. It's just the reality, and there's nothing I can do about it.

Therefore, when writing proper names as they are might cause trouble, I use pseudonyms.

I sincerely hope you'll understand.

2010.1.19

濡木痴夢男のおしゃべり芝居 第百十二回

Nureki Chimuo's Talking Theater Chapter 112

日陰の愉悦

The Pleasure of Shade

I wrote that the theater company “Tobu” is a distinguished troupe with a long history, established prestige, and considerable talent.

This “Tobu” is recorded in the “Encyclopedia of Performing Arts,” published in 1953 by a reputable and established publishing house.

I would like to list the name of this publisher, as well as the names of the authors and editors. However, as mentioned earlier, I anonymized the “Tobu” troupe itself so I cannot publicly disclose this information here.

This has resulted in a somewhat awkward situation, but I hope you will forgive me.

Having chosen to live only in places where the sun never shines, I also feel the urge to record that I was once connected to such a theater company.

Perhaps it is the only past I can speak of with pride.

I don't think I need to belittle myself this much, but past traumas have made me this cautious, this cowardly.

(I'd like to write about this trauma in detail someday.)

However, this sense of inferiority stemming from the trauma also supports my work in some ways, so it's not entirely negative.

I suspect I have a tendency to embrace trauma like stroking a cat's head.

Theater Company Tobu

Today, the issue of children's culture is being vigorously discussed, and the necessary facilities for it are gradually being established. This is undoubtedly a cause for celebration. Yet, the current reality that we still lack even a single children's theater is infinitely saddening for the world of children. Despite this lament, we cannot help but express our heartfelt respect for the efforts of the various children's theater troupes that continue to perform sequentially in certain limited venues. On the other hand, it is truly lamentable that such efforts still receive far too little attention from society at large and from ordinary households. It is said that there are currently over sixty children's theater groups nationwide, with Tokyo alone boasting more than thirty. Yet the vast majority are merely children's club-style organizations, and only a handful demonstrate the activities of a truly professional children's theater company. Among them, the only troupe that has consistently pursued "the pursuit of high artistic quality for children to watch and the exploration of theatrical genres" as its motto, enduring a history of hardship spanning the past twenty five years, is the "Tobu" troupe. The theater troupe "Tobu" was founded in May 1928 by Miyatsu Hiroshi and Shibata Keiichi, making its debut at the Koshikawa Goten club in Tokyo with its first performance, "The Lion Who Forgot His Debt of Gratitude." In 1929, their seventh production, "The Fox's Trial," marked their first step into Waseda University's Okuma Auditorium, which was also the first step toward establishing fairy tale theater. Since then, their performances in Tokyo, culminating in "Snow White" and "Spring Children's Songs" at the Mitsukoshi Theater in August 1952, have reached a total of eighty-five performances. During this period, beginning with the December 1933 production of "Don Quixote" at the Tsukiji Small Theater, the troupe maintained vigorous activity, staging adaptations of foreign masterpieces, advocating realism in children's theater, and presenting original plays. In October 1939, they performed "Kaze no Matsuburo" and "The World of Ghosts" at the Yurakuza Theater, marking their first entry into a major Tokyo venue. The troupe also ventured into film, collaborating with studios like Nikkatsu Tamagawa and Shochiku Ofuna to produce children's films such as "Tora-chan's Diary," "Kaze no Matsuburo," and "The Sailor." In 1941 (Showa 16), a formal contract was signed with Toho, marking the troupe's transition to a semi-professional status. During the war years, they undertook comfort tours to Manchuria and Korea, and also continued touring various regions to entertain evacuated schoolchildren. After the war, while performing in Tokyo, the troupe focused primarily on touring schools and traveling performances in the provinces. They left their footprints throughout every prefecture and city nationwide, from Hokkaido in the north to Kyushu in the south. In June 1952 (Showa 27), under the sponsorship of the Ministry of Education, the Tokyo Metropolitan Board of Education, and the Asahi Shimbun, they staged the five-act, seven-scene play "The Wild Duck in the City" by Kuri Kikuoka as their 25th anniversary commemorative performance at the Imperial Theater, continuing their legacy to this day.¹

The above is the introduction to "Theater Company Tobu" as published in the 1953 edition of the "Encyclopedia of Performing Arts."

I knew of this "Tobu" company from childhood, without anyone ever telling me about it.

¹ While Nureki anonymized the Theater Company name, he was not very creative. The company in question is "Todo. (劇団東童)"

This means I must have been interested in theatrical activities since my elementary school days. More than interest, it was a longing.

And the “Tobu” theater company had been performing in a way that seemed dazzling to my eyes, even during the war years.

Writer Tsune Yamanaka has a profound work titled, “We, the Young Citizens.”

The copy I own is the 1989 Kodansha Bunko edition, but it was originally serialized in the quarterly magazine “Bengyo” published by Keisoshobo before being released as a standalone book.

For someone like me who lived through the “We, the Young Citizens” era, it is a labor of love packed with heart-wrenching, poignant content that cuts deep upon reading.

Born in 1931 (Showa 6), Tsune Yamanaka meticulously documents, based on extensive materials, the dehumanizing education and unreasonable pressures imposed by the powerful figures of the “Greater Japanese Empire” that he experienced in the national schools and junior high schools during the war.

Tsune Yamanaka and I are only one year apart in age, meaning we were raised within the same generation.

For example, in January 1940, I was gathered at the Imperial Palace Plaza as a representative of sixth-grade national school students. Alongside thousands of other pupils, I was forced to sing the “Hymn Celebrating the 2,600th Anniversary of the Founding of Japan.”

I still remember the freezing cold of my fingers as I stood rigidly in the biting wind on the Imperial Palace Plaza, not even allowed to put my hands in my coat pockets while singing.

However, I am not introducing the book “We, the Young Citizens” here because I wish to write about such things.

It is because this book contains the cover photograph from the program for a performance by the theater troupe “Tobu.”

I imagine the author would find it deeply offensive that someone like me would use the profoundly valuable content of this “We, the Young Citizens,” but I humbly ask for your forgiveness.

The cover photo from that “Tobu” program is printed full-page, so the text is clearly legible.

“Selected for the Imperial Era 2,600th Anniversary Celebration Performing Arts Festival
Sponsored by the Japan Cultural Federation”

Under this title,

“Yamada Kosaku - Children at Dawn” is listed.

According to Tsune Yamanaka’s writing, this was a prize-winning entry. Directed by Keisuke Tsutsui, it was performed from November 5th to 10th, 1940, at the New National Theater and the Tsukiji Small Theater, which had just changed its name that month. Set design was by Keiichi Shibata.

“Simultaneously, three war poems were recited under the direction of Miyatsu Hiroshi. The latter half saw daily sold out performances. The three war poems were ‘Comfort Packet’ by Yamamoto Kazuo, ‘Triumphant Troops’ by Kusano Shinpei, and ‘Fighting Soldier Ants’ by Yoda Jun’ichi.”

So writes Tsune Yamanaka.

Furthermore, the cover of the program prominently printed in large letters states that this stage production was the “45th Performing Arts Festival Production of the Tobu Theater Company.”

In this tense and unsettled era, “Tobu” was a theater company boasting an impressive forty-five productions.

In other words, what I mean to say is that, though only for a brief period, the theater company “Tobu” that I belonged to was, at that time, such a so-called “major” presence.

This fact remains etched deep within my heart as a quiet “pride.”

During that harsh war, Tobu was a troupe that could be called “major” precisely because, in order to continue its pure children’s theater movement, it sometimes had to curry favor with those in power and perform plays with a strong whiff of militarism.

It was a troupe with a solid track record, properly recorded in the history of Japanese theater.

If you defy those in power, you cannot become major.

From the day I was born, I have lived only in poor, miserable circumstances, far removed from the world called “mainstream.”

I feel as if I have always lived in the shadows, furtively avoiding the eyes of those in power, with a sense of servility.

That doesn't mean I ever yearned for the "mainstream," though.

I prefer the damp shade to the mainstream.

I'm convinced the environment surrounding me was always miserable, poor, and painted in dark colors.

It's true I grew up in the midst of war and my family was poor, but perhaps my innate penchant for decadent tastes turned me into someone who finds pleasure in that submissive, defeated dog mentality.

I even find myself captivated by the image of myself, in that underdog posture, watching gloomily from the shadows. I think this sense of delight is ugly and base.

I'm twisted. A nasty character.

Yet, there's also a part of me, however small, that finds myself drawn to the "mainstream."

If I lived each day aiming for the "mainstream," my mood would be brighter and easier. Life would be simpler.

But for me, hiding in a dark, sulky, shadowy place brings deeper pleasure than the "mainstream."

I find my own personality complex and chaotic. There have been nights I've agonized alone in self-loathing.

Yet, this boy with such strong inferiority and a twisted personality grew up to be a man with the profession of Nureki Chimuo.

2010.1.29

濡木痴夢男のおしゃべり芝居 第百十三回

Nureki Chimuo's Talking Theater Chapter 113

主君の馬前に死す

I Die Before My Lord's Horse

About half a year ago, no, perhaps even longer, I was approached about this project and have been preparing ever since. The time has finally come to begin writing “The World of Minomura Ko” (working title), co-authored by myself and Rutsu Nakahara

This will be an original work of approximately 300 pages in paperback format, published by Kawade Shobo Shinsha.

It is a long-established publisher with a solid and distinguished track record, having previously published six of my manuscripts as paperbacks.

For a lowly hack like me, it feels like an undeserved honor to be associated with such an authoritative and historic publisher. Perhaps this will become my life's work.

I wrote that I spent over half a year preparing after receiving the offer, but the one actually doing the preparation was Nakahara Rutsu-san.

I, in fact, did nothing. I was doing other things.

(By “other things,” I mean I was writing pieces like this “Talking Theater” here and there, or filming for the reopening of “Kinbiken,” but I intend to write about that separately.)

I left all the preparation for writing “The World of Minomura Ko” entirely to Nakahara Rutsu-san.

The volume of work by Minomura Ko, a painter, writer, and editor who displayed outstanding talent, is immeasurable, and his other activities spanned a vast range.

Records of his almost superhuman work ethic are preserved in printed form at the Sex Industry Museum.

It's only natural that Nakahara Rutsu-san, the director of this museum, is in the most suitable position to gather and organize materials from around 1950, representing the earliest period of Minomura's work.

Furthermore, beyond her position as director, I am convinced that Nakahara-san, as a pure appreciator of Minomura Ko's work, is the person best suited to provide the optimal commentary.

Frankly speaking, Nakahara Rutsu's appreciation is deeper and sharper than mine, despite my history of working alongside Minomura Ko.

She also possesses a cool, precise analytical mind.

Needless to say, Minomura Ko's artistic world centers on the theme of "SM."

(I currently detest how this term "SM" is so casually, frivolously, and crudely thrown around everywhere, sometimes even used cynically and contemptuously by comedians, but since there's no other suitable expression and it's generally understandable, I reluctantly use it again here for convenience.)

Nakahara Rutsu-san demonstrates profound knowledge and substantial understanding across the entire spectrum of these SM inclinations.

The depth of her knowledge and analytical skill regarding the intricate details of the myriad branches of complex and subtle abnormal preferences leaves even me, who has worked in this field for many years, utterly amazed.

To be perfectly honest, she knows far more than I do.

Despite being about a third of my age, she possesses truly exceptional talent and insight.

How is it possible that she understands the reality and psychology of these people better than I do, someone who has actually interacted with so many enthusiasts?

When I asked a somewhat spiteful question about abnormal sexuality, she answered smoothly. The accuracy and depth of her response stunned me.

"Gah! How can you understand the deep psychology of those enthusiasts just by being in this museum space?!" I nearly fell over in shock.

In May 2008, when my sixth paperback book, “Bondage: As Long as I Live,” was published by Kawade Shobo Shinsha, I humbly requested Nakahara Rutsu-san to write the commentary. Even before that, I had been astonished by her rich and profound knowledge, and how many times I nearly fell off my chair in amazement.

For those who haven’t yet read Nakahara Rutsu’s commentary, “The Other Face of Nureki Chimuo: A Fierce Writing Life,” which I included at the end of this book, I urge you to read it.

When Nakahara-san handed me the manuscript and I read it for the first time, I was so moved that my heart stopped beating. I felt as though I was thinking, “I die for those who know me.” No, that’s not an exaggeration.

If I were a samurai in the Warring States period, “I die before my lord’s horse.” That’s how I felt.

Essentially, had Nakahara Rutsu-san been a warrior clad in armor and helmet, charging across the battlefield upon her horse, I was so moved that I would have gladly seized the reins of that horse, fought the advancing enemy, and died by the sword to protect my lord.

(My descriptions do tend to be theatrical. That’s why I titled this entire piece “Talking Theater.”)

Thanks to Nakahara-san’s commentary, the book “Bondage: As Long as I Live” became a precious volume I will never forget for the rest of my life.

Why did I, a grown adult, feel such profound emotion? Because in that commentary, Nakahara-san acknowledged the things I had written in the past, and with solid, restrained prose, offered such generous praise.

Starting with the now legendary “Kitan Club” and “Uramado,” and continuing through the heyday of “SM magazines,” I wrote an embarrassingly vast number of pieces, novels, picture stories, and essays under numerous pen names.

Most were commissioned by editors and the fees for publishing my manuscripts became my livelihood.

There was a time when I would write anything for the sake of getting paid. I wrote with a single-minded focus on catering to SM.

Those novels, while suitable for publication in abnormal entertainment magazines, were not works deserving of legitimate critical appraisal.

There were times when I felt quite pleased with my writing, but deep down, with each piece I wrote, a sense of inferiority grew.

Adding a dash of abnormality to perfectly ordinary entertainment fiction (naturally, pulp fiction) meant it would get published immediately and I'd get paid.

It was nothing but an easy way to make a living.

I was subservient toward my own writing. I never once thought it was any good. I always felt a sense of shame.

The reason I write under various pen names is because of that subservience and inferiority complex.

Embarrassingly enough, I had aspired to write "pure literature."

From my late teens to my early twenties, I was a somewhat radical, left-leaning literary youth.

Yet, to earn a living, I survived by writing numerous perverted novels (condemned by society as lowbrow).

Now, Nakahara Rutsu-san has clearly acknowledged these very novels.

I feel a simple, heartfelt gratitude.

This wasn't some sales pitch or bland praise meant to make my books look good. It was a convincing assessment born from him having sincerely read every single piece of my writing, truly every single one, down to the tiniest, mere few-line passages.

Thanks to Nakahara-san, the inferiority complex I've carried all this time has faded a little.

(It's not completely gone...my inferiority complex runs deep.)

Adding more words of gratitude to the commentary Nakahara-san wrote might risk sounding like I'm bragging about my own work, so I'll stop here.

Even if I am a shameless hack writer, I do possess that much sense and discretion.

Nakahara-san's commentary then came to the attention of Fukushima-san at Kawade Shobo Shinsha, leading to the writing of this volume, "The World of Minomura Ko" (again, this is still a tentative title).

I hold feelings for Minomura Ko that are deeper and more intense than those for any blood relative.

When I write about Minomura Ko, there's always a risk I'll become overly emotional.

Therefore, Fukushima-san likely decided to structure this new book around Nakahara Rutsu, who possesses the ability to evaluate Minomura's body of work calmly and objectively, coupled with meticulous and delicate expressive power, as its core.

While there have been several tributes to Minomura Ko's work since his passing, I anticipate that Nakahara Rutsu will offer a fresh, profoundly thoughtful, and stimulating critical essay. I look forward to it.

Naturally, I am delighted to assist with this project.

Helping Nakahara-san with her work is an immense honor.

If you'll forgive this theatrical expression, I now feel a surge of passion akin to dying in battle before my lord's horse as I prepare to begin this new task of cooperating with Nakahara-san.

In my case, while praising Minomura's works, I also wish to revisit and recount anew the rich and deeply human aspects of his various endeavors.

In any case, thanks to Nakahara-san, the materials on Minomura's work, from paintings and writings to photographs, have been gathered abundantly and splendidly.

It truly demonstrated the formidable capabilities of the Sex Industry Museum.

First, I wish to begin with the founding story of "Kitan Club."

And so, from 1946 (Showa 21), when I was a sixteen year old boy, this "Talking Theater" has leaped over sixty-odd years in one go, landing us in 2010.

At present, this is the biggest hot news for me, so I hope you'll bear with me.

2010.2.2

濡木痴夢男のおしゃべり芝居 第百十四回

Nureki Chimuo's Talking Theater Chapter 114

嘘つきは作家の始まり

A Liar is the Beginning of a Writer

“How are things going between Rakka-san and Nureki-san these days? I’m curious. The story between Rakka-san and Sensei is of great interest to me, so please do let me know.”

I occasionally receive letters like this.

Everyone knows I prefer handwritten letters sent by post, so almost all the letters I receive are written in ink.

Moreover, everyone writes such careful, heartfelt letters that sometimes I feel a closer connection than when we meet and talk in person.

When I receive such letters, I simply cannot help but reply.

So, to those concerned about my relationship with Rakka-san, I will report.

It’s fine. We’re getting along just as well as ever. No, even better than before, working closely together on various things.

We seem to be meeting more often, and the time we spend together doing things has also increased.

What do you mean, “doing things together?”

If asked that, I’d be a bit at a loss to explain in just one word, but well, it’s all sorts of fun things.

We don’t do things that aren’t fun (obviously).

I’m currently serializing these “Talking Theater” style writings on a site called Web Sniper, and they’re all about what’s happening with Rakka-san right now.

So, if you read those, you should understand perfectly. It feels a bit odd saying this myself, but it's pretty amazing.

After all, it's called "Nureki Chimuo's Testament of Obscene Pleasure."

Inoue-kun, who handles Web Sniper, praised it, saying, "'Testament of Obscene Pleasure?' Hmm, that's a great title. As always, Nureki-san sure knows how to come up with clever titles."

Feeling good about that, I replied, "I'll work hard on the content too, not just the title."

So, I'm putting quite a bit of effort into the content as well.

Honestly, I'm amazed at myself for being able to write such shameless stuff at my age.

Well, maybe it's precisely because I'm older now that I can write it.

Even though I'm just a third-rate writer who's only ever churned out cheap erotic novels, getting older means I can write stuff like this now.

Put another way, maybe I've just become more brazen.

A writer I respect, [Chokichi Kurumaya](#), has some harsh words to say.

"Writing a novel also begins with mercilessly speaking ill of others behind their backs. Nothing gets a conversation going like trading insults. Gradually, words become exaggerated, and lies start to creep in. That 'lie' is precisely where creation begins. However, literature cannot be built solely on speaking ill of others. The time comes when you must also mercilessly expose your own backbiting. What do you do then? Most people cleverly give up on writing novels right there. Clever people cannot write novels. You cannot write novels unless you become a fool. Clever people are intelligent, but they are weak-minded. Only those with strong minds can write novels.

Writing a novel means, first and foremost, that the author themselves must be wounded. You must bleed."

And, he also said this:

"I have written only what has seeped into my very bones, using words that have seeped into my very bones. I have written novels with the spirit that I could lose my life at any moment. I have written with the resolve to trade my own life for my novels, to live or die."

This is transcribed from “My Theory of Fiction,” within “Hurricane” by Chokichi Kurumaya, published by Bunshun Bunko.

“Hurricane” is read as “Hyofu.”

Since it has furigana², I can read it too.

But this character³ probably isn’t in the computer.

It’s three ‘dog’ characters stacked together, with the radical⁴ being “wind.”

I’ve never seen a character like this before.

As I’ve explained several times before, all of my manuscripts are handwritten.

I don’t use machines like word processors at all. It’s not that I don’t use them, it’s that I can’t use them.

Most of the manuscripts I write are converted to electronic text and published by R-san.

R-san is now practically my right-hand man.

What do you think, R-san?

Is the character “𩇑” available on a computer?

But even if it’s not in the computer, finding it somewhere and magically making it work is one of R-san’s specialties, so I’m sure she’ll figure something out.

After all, the Bunshun Bunko edition actually has the character “𩇑” printed in it.

I did check it myself, just to be sure.

It’s not in a standard Japanese dictionary.

It’s not in the Kojien either.

² Furigana is when the phonetic alphabet, hiragana, is written above the kanji, often seen in situations where the kanji reading is obscure or to help students learn kanji in reading exercises.

³ The character in question is 𩇑, which is not part of the joyo kanji, the standard set of kanji that Japanese students learn in their education from elementary through high school.

⁴ A radical is a basic component of kanji. Each kanji character is composed of a number of radicals. The kanji 犬 is dog, and 風 is wind. If you inspect the character mentioned above, you can see this description is accurate.

My study has old Japanese dictionaries and Chinese character dictionaries, but since I don't use them regularly they've gotten lost somewhere and I can't find them right now.

As for the meaning of the character “翫,” I'll look it up later at my leisure. But Chokichi Kurumaya's words are truly splendid, and even a petty person like myself can understand them well.

I sometimes wish I could make such a grand, splendid declaration myself, but it's simply beyond me.

Even if I stood on my head, I couldn't say it.

I'm a coward who loves the easy way out. So even if I can't write good novels, I just want to live as long as possible.

(I suppose it's because I love the easy way out that I managed to stick with a job like “bondage specialist” for so long...)

I want to live a long, drawn-out life, lazily savoring the pleasures of this world.

I don't mind shedding a little blood, but I really don't want to spill too much.

I want to avoid painful or distressing experiences as much as possible.

Regarding the point where Chokichi Kurumaya says, “Lies are the very beginning of creation,” I think he's absolutely right about that part.

So, “liars are the beginning of novelists,” that makes perfect sense to me. I'm relieved.

But saying it plainly as a “lie” would be tasteless, dull, and lacking charm, so I'll call it “acting” instead.

Even regarding Rakka-san, writing only one hundred percent truth could, first of all, risk causing her trouble.

No matter how careful I am to avoid causing trouble, living in this troublesome world means I might inadvertently cause some at some point. While that might be unavoidable, I still want to cause as little trouble as possible.

Well, I suppose this is what you'd call age-appropriate discretion.

I don't want to cause Rakka-san any unnecessary worry.

So, while I can't write about the most crucial things, I will write the truth to a certain extent. I have written it.

If I don't write the truth. Even if they say "lies are the beginning of creation," it just isn't interesting for either the writer or the reader.

For example, I think I'll write the name of the love hotel we went to exactly as it is.

(I've already written it properly in "Testament of Obscene Pleasure.")

Huh? What's that?

You mean even if I wrote something like that, readers wouldn't find it interesting at all?

I wonder. Is that so?

But if I wrote the love hotel's name and where it is, wouldn't it be a little more interesting, since you'd know the range of my and Rakka-san's activities?

I'll write it.

2010.2.7

濡木痴夢男のおしゃべり芝居 第百十五回

Nureki Chimuo's Talking Theater Chapter 115

わが師への礼状

Letter of Gratitude to My Teacher

To my Acchitei⁵ Master:

I am writing in response to your kind letter. Thank you very much.

Along with your letter, you also sent me the substantial explanatory pamphlet for the “Namiki Sosuke Exhibition” at the Waseda University Theater Museum, beautiful postcards featuring theatrical prints of the first, second, and third generations of Toyokuni, Shizuo Yamakawa’s new publication for Kodansha, “People of the Far Side” (Human Stories from the Third Floor of the Kabuki-za), and the regional magazine “Shimotsuke no Kokoro,” which is truly splendid and magnificent. Thank you so very much for sending me all these things.

The regional magazine is truly remarkable, both for the richness of its content and its value as a resource. Frankly, I was astonished.

The reason you sent me such a magazine was because, within this “Shimotsuke no Kokoro,” there was an article about my beloved “Katabami-za.”

In the serialized column “Shimotsuke Theater Chronicles” by Shimizu Ichiro, a traditional performing arts researcher, there is a description of the play “[Utsunomiya Tsuru Tenjo](#).” Within that piece, the names of the Tokyo theater “Kotobuki-za” and the “Katabami-za,” which once performed this play, appear.

My acchitei master deliberately placed a bookmark on that very page before sending it to me.

What a thoughtful gesture. As always, I am deeply grateful and moved.

⁵ Acchitei is short for acchitei kocchi, which means amateur rakugo performer.

I read it immediately. Shimizu Ichiro must be accomplished as a local historian too, as he provided a detailed and careful explanation of the “Utsunomiya Tsuru Tenjo” play, which I found very educational.

The Tsurutenjo storytelling, plays, and films were quite popular from the Taisho era through the Showa era, and I was familiar with them, but I had never seen them performed as kabuki.

(The Katabami-za company favored selecting such rare plays and performed them quite skillfully, which is likely why they still come up in conversation among theater lovers today.)

The introduction mentioned that Shimizu Ichiro was born in 1934. Though four years my junior, he seems to have seen and remembered many older works. I am deeply impressed.

The Toho film “[Iemitsu and Hikosaburo](#)” (screenplay by Hideo Oguni, directed by Masahiro Makino) that Shimizu Ichiro wrote about, I saw it myself at the [Yurakuza Theater](#) in Hibiya right after its release in 1942. It featured the popular stars of the time, Roppa Furukawa and Kazuo Hasegawa. Even though the Pacific War had already begun, the theater displayed large, flashy caricature posters for the film, promoting it lavishly. I remember it vividly from my childhood.

Being a Roppa film, it was a lighthearted period comedy filled with cheerful music and songs.

But strangely, the crucial “Tsurutenjo” scene is faint in my memory. I even wonder if it was even in the film at all.

Later, I saw another film starring Roppa and Hasegawa Kazuo, the famous storyteller’s tale of a renowned doctor and actor, “[Otoko no Hanamichi](#),” also at the Yurakuza.

This was, of course, the classic story of “The Famous Doctor and the Famous Actor.” It was a tale of gratitude and friendship between Hasegawa Kazuo’s Kagaya and Roppa’s eye doctor, Habu Genseki.

While the master storyteller at the other teahouse is far more knowledgeable than I, I recently revisited and learned from the detailed explanation in my revered teacher Yoshizawa Hideaki’s book, “Encyclopedia of Storytelling Works,” about this “Famous Doctor and Famous Actor” tale. In the storytelling version, the doctor’s name is Nakarai Gentaro, later known as Nakarai Hogen.

(Thank you for inviting me to Dr. Yoshizawa Hideaki’s lecture a week from now. I will certainly attend. Furthermore, I am deeply honored to hear that after the lecture a month later, I will be invited to Dr. Yoshizawa’s residence. I will definitely be there.)

By the way, I just suddenly remembered.

My “Talking Theater” here is currently taking a breather at the point where my younger self joined the theater troupe “Tobu.” But the very first job I was given at “Tobu” was, believe it or not, to appear as an extra in a movie starring this very same Roppa.

It was a Toho film right after the war, and I distinctly remember the title being something like “If My Song Had Wings.”

It was a film where Roppa co-starred with a popular boy soprano singer of the time named Kagami Ichiro.

Five or six boys were selected from “Tobu,” and we appeared as “school friends” interacting with the lead actor, Ichiro Kagami.

The filming location was Toho’s Kinuta Studio.

While waiting for the shoot, Roppa sat solidly in his own special chair. With the calm, gentle face of a star, he emitted that characteristic “Foh, foh, foh” laugh while chatting with the staff.

Kagami Ichiro was clinging to Roppa’s body, playfully showing off to us extras from “Tobu.”

I digressed. My apologies.

I also saw the 1956 Shinto film “The Strange Tale of Utsunomiya’s Floating Ceiling” in Asakusa.

I generally enjoy these eerie tales, so I never miss them.

Whenever I see “suspended ceiling” stories in period films or TV shows, I always find something odd about them.

I just can’t quite grasp the mechanism behind the “suspended ceiling” devices supposedly built to assassinate the shogun.

These massive wooden gears, set up and meshed together in the attic, start grinding, creaking, and groaning loudly when the moment comes.

The mechanism is that when the complexly meshed gears start turning all at once, something somewhere starts moving, the ceiling falls, and the people underneath are crushed. But I just don’t get it.

First of all, if gears made such loud, grinding, clattering noises when they moved, the people below would hear it and know danger was imminent.

Well, no matter what movie you watch, the gears always stop at the last possible moment, and the lord escapes unharmed.

(This kind of scene also frequently appears in TV shows like [Mito Komon](#).)

It's genuinely funny how, despite these simple wooden giant gears making such a tremendous noise as they turn, the mechanism for the ceiling collapsing remains completely baffling. It's fun. I like it.

The craftsmen and carpenters trapped inside the castle, building the gears, are either killed after completion or nearly killed to keep the rebels' secret.

There was also a story where the carpenter's foreman had a beautiful daughter, and she and a young samurai among the rebels were lovers. What could happen?

Well, it's quite dramatic in many ways.

If the goal was to eliminate Shogun Iemitsu and his inner circle, I can't help but think it would have been simpler and more reliable to slip poison into their soup bowls at dinner, rather than going to all this trouble making such conspicuous tools that are easy to expose.

This story of "The Strange Tale of Utsunomiya's Floating Ceiling" is also detailed in Professor Hideaki Yoshizawa's "Encyclopedia of Storytelling Works."

It's genuinely funny how, despite these simple wooden giant gears making such a tremendous noise as they turn, the mechanism for the ceiling collapsing remains completely baffling. It's fun. I like it.

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I've gone off on a tangent again.

"The Loyal Subjects of Chushingura"

"Sugawara Denju Tenarai Kagami"

"Yoshitsune and the Thousand Cherry Trees"

When it comes to the author of these works, I immediately think of [Takeda Izumo](#), but it turns out that the original and crucial scenes within these masterpieces were written by [Namiki Sosuke](#).

I learned this fact from the pamphlet about the Waseda University Theater Museum that my teacher gave me.

Apparently, the eighth act (the fourth act in Bunraku) of my absolute favorite play, "Sugawara Denju Tenarai Kagami," titled "Terakoya," is essentially close to the form written by Namiki Sosuke.

In this "Talking Theater," I got carried away and transcribed the "Iroha Okuri" narration, but that was actually a famous scene created by Namiki Sosuke.

In this pamphlet, Mikiko Uchiyama-san, who wrote about the collaborative joruri works of Takeda Izumo, Miyoshi Shoraku, and Namiki Sosuke, was apparently the teacher of my accchitei master.

Shizuo Yamakawa's book "The People of the Grand Stage" (The Third Floor of the Kabuki-za: Tales of Humanity) is truly fascinating.

It's so thrilling it makes your whole body tingle. It's frustrating, but it's fascinating.

I knew that reading it would make me writhe in frustration, so I had decided not to read it.

But I just couldn't resist.

And sure enough, after reading it, I writhed.

I feel jealousy and an envy so strong I could kill him for his position, but it's still fascinating.

It's fascinating enough to bring tears to my eyes.

I'm envious, so envious it makes me dizzy, yet at the same time, a warm feeling envelops my entire body.

So this is the world of intoxication and blissful ecstasy.

It's a dazzling world beyond my reach.

I'm a lazy person who hates effort, poor in everything, and sulky, so I just watch with my fingers in my mouth, tears welling up.

Thank you.

I am truly grateful for your unchanging consideration towards someone like me.

I am always, always thankful for your constant thoughtfulness.

2010.2.10

濡木痴夢男のおしゃべり芝居 第百十六回

Nureki Chimuo's Talking Theater Chapter 116

夜鷹のおとよの詩

The Prostitute Otoyo's Poem

I occasionally send faxes to Rakka-san.

(I still don't have a cell phone.)

Though I'm technologically challenged, I can manage to use the phone and the fax machine attached to it.

My pleasurable relationship with Rakka-san isn't just about locking ourselves in a love hotel room and doing things.

(Of course not.)

We spend more time on heart-to-heart communication, meaning uninterrupted conversation where we pour out our thoughts and feelings, than on physically demanding activities.

And sometimes, this time spent talking is actually more pleasurable.

Both she and I become incredibly talkative when it's just the two of us.

We talk so much it feels almost obsessive, even to me. We talk until we're practically foaming at the mouth.

There's always a mountain of things we want to talk about and it never ends.

(Though the subject is always doubts about SM. Her depth of knowledge on SM is extraordinary. There are times I can't keep up.)

Our discussions aren't limited to love hotels.

The faxes I send to Rakka-san arrive at her workplace.

In one corner of the large desk she has dedicated to herself sits a receiver with a rather complex shape.

That machine activates, and the handwritten manuscript I composed arrives exactly as I wrote it.

(Of course.)

Even though it's for Rakka-san's exclusive use, it's still an office within a company. Other eyes are present.

Since there's no telling when someone other than her might see it, I'm careful with these private messages, which are essentially an extension of our discussions.

I use more honorifics than necessary, writing in a tone that appears strictly businesslike.

She always reads between the lines of my messages, cleverly and accurately discerning the true meaning I casually hide there.

Sometimes I write something like poetry and send it directly to her via fax.

When she receives it, she stores it away somewhere in the drawers of her large desk.

I'm terrible at organizing or storing things, so even poems I've taken the trouble to write get lost immediately.

I'm stingy about everything, so I never throw things away immediately after writing them, but I don't carefully store them either.

The reason I occasionally send Rakka-san these poetic things I write is because she is always the subject of those poems.

Essentially, those poems are like an extension of our conversations.

Since they're like an extension of my rambling, I want to transcribe them into this "Talking Theater" too, to preserve them.

I mentioned before that I serialize something called "Nureki Chimuo's Testament of Obscene Pleasure" in a place called Web Sniper. Actually, though the expression is slightly different, these poems might also be called my other "Testament of Obscene Pleasure."

Well, to put it simply, "A shameless person will die anyway." I suppose that's about right.

(I suppose this might be a bit of a nuisance for Rakka-san, who got caught up in this. My apologies.)

Shiritori⁶ Song 1

Though the colors bloom and fade,
You to a hundred, I to ninety-nine

Beating the drum with all our might
The night we swore our vows, holding tight
Is now but a hollow farewell

The train departs, smoke lingers behind,
That lingering smoke, a thorn in my side

Sleep tight, sleep tight, oh sleep tight
In the dead of night, I rise silently
An apple cannot be eaten to the core

That one I believe risked their life
A crow flies in the moonlit sky

Though the crow cries, the night does not end
Though the colors bloom, they scatter

Shiritori Song 2

Though the colors bloom, they scatter

⁶ Shiritori is a Japanese word game, where the final phonetic of a sentence or phrase is used to start the next sentence. Usually played with two or more people, but it can be used as a poetic form.

Men are, after all, fickle creatures

With the sharp thorns of wild rose stems
They wound the woman who returns

After wandering endlessly
I learned the taste of suffering

This is no ordinary matter
Senbei, manju, konpeito
Finally, drip by drip, drop by drop

Five divorces, four children
Endurance alone is my fate

Living on without giving up, yet utterly exhausted
Placing my child on the balance pole
I'll sell the child who needs no care
I'll sell the cheap and sturdy child

Come on, buy a child
Though the colors bloom, they will scatter

Shiritori Song 3

Though the colors bloom, they will scatter
At thirty six, a woman's prime

Only hardships cling to me
Split at heaven, and it falls on me

Lapis and crystal shine when polished
But my birth's misfortune won't let me

Deaf, dumb, missing a leg
Mocked and kicked

What I lack, I make up in bed
I make men happy

Rumors call me a wanton woman
Otoyo, the prostitute whose name is known

When in a good mood, I spread my legs

On nights when vile customers enrage me

I bare my teeth and bite a man's member
With a sound that echoes, severing it with hate

Chanting sutras, I became a killer
The number slain surpassed ten

Finally, I am caught
Crucified on a pillar reaching to the heavens

If you don't know, I'll tell you
The life of an unlucky woman

Serves you right, you bastards
I lived my life to the fullest

The whore Otoyō lived to the fullest
Though the colors bloom, they will scatter.

I've shared just three poems for now.

(I have many more. Sometimes when I'm in the mood, I write several at once. I write intensely, five or even ten at a time.)

The prostitute's cry is me.

I am a man, but when I write as if I were a woman, I enter a perverted alternate world. It feels wonderful, and words flow smoothly.

Edo-period prostitutes carried rolled-up straw mats to ply their trade, while Nureki Chimuo carries a bag containing ropes to offer his body. It's much the same thing.

Since it's much the same thing, I can slip into the prostitutes's mood and write effortlessly.

This is how Rakka-san and I share our pleasure.

2010.2.19

濡木痴夢男のおしゃべり芝居 第百十七回

Nureki Chimuo's Talking Theater Chapter 117

人に言えないかなしみばかり

Sorrows I Cannot Speak Of

After sharing my poetry (or something like it), I unexpectedly received such high praise that I got carried away and decided to write here again.

“Flattery will get you everywhere.”

I jot down words that come to mind on scraps of paper lying around, intending to revise them later, and stuff them into a large paper bag.

It piles up.

Then the paper bag gets lost and I can't find it anymore.

It's a bit frustrating.

I'm stingy, so even if it's something worthless, I feel like it's a waste because I went to the trouble of writing it.

So before I lose it, I'll write it down here in this “Talking Theater.”

The Setting Sun

As dusk falls in pale ink hues
You truly possess such grace
Downy hair, stray locks, a slender nape
Your hair the color of a crow's wet feathers

The tofu seller passes, his horn blaring
You stand quietly on the bridge
With sorry you cannot tell anyone

The setting sun sinks crimson red
Only shadows stretch even longer

Just like the previous shiritori song, I wrote this one by putting myself in the girl's shoes.

When I unconsciously slip into a girl's mindset like this, does that make me a pervert
after all?

Cold Town

I carried myself on my back
And I went to sell myself in the city

This city always has a gloomy, overcast sky
So I couldn't sell myself

I pressed my belly
Against your back
And shouted my sales pitch
Until blood came from my throat
But I couldn't sell myself

The townspeople peered through narrow door cracks
And watched me with pity
And whispered among themselves
They pitied me

It's a terribly cold town
Your back
Pressed against my belly
That warmth alone is my anchor

I walk through this town
Selling myself
Crying out
My sales pitch

Monster

Yes, that's right. I am a freak
Just as you say
I am a freak
A freak who can't show my face in public

Eh? What did you say?
A disfigured monster?

Ah, perhaps that's true.
But a freak
I have a freak's own antennae
And no matter how kindly
You smile at me
And speak to me

Your eyes honestly
Recognize me as a freak

Yes, that's fine
I won't deny it

Since I won't deny it, please
Don't drag me out in public anymore,
Being called out by name
In front of people who know nothing,
I really don't like it

My skin, see,
It's covered in wounds like this all over
If I pile more wounds on top of these,
They won't heal easily

Looking it up in the dictionary
"Gete mono" means "clumsy person"
Someone who eats
Creepy, peculiar things
And also
Someone who loves things most people dislike

That's right. I know.

You're a good person
Kind and refined
You are someone who loves things done well

I know this, so please
Don't force yourself
To draw near me

With such affection

And so, writing poems like this, I

Sometimes

Enjoy

Self-mockery

This self mockery leaves me

In a very sweet mood

So, after all, I am

A monster

Both playful poems like “Shiritori Song” and “The Setting Sun” and slightly darker feelings like “Cold Town” and “Monster” exist equally within me.

And then I also write poems like the following “Yoshikiri Naita.”

Yoshikiri Naita (The Reed Warbler Cries)

The reed warbler cries

In the shadow of the reeds

The reed warbler sings

Making the reeds tremble

In the shadow of the reeds

A woman weeps

The reed warbler stirs

Its throat swelling

The white belly

Of the weeping woman

In the water by the riverbank

The sunset burns

The sunset stains

The woman and warbler

The woman who cut her belly

Why did she cut her belly?

Soaked through with water
Her hair drenched

The reed warbler cried
The woman who cut her belly cried

The reed warbler dwells in the reed beds by the riverbank, singing its heart out. It is written as gyogyoshi, and is also known by the slightly more sophisticated name of Yoshihara sparrow.

Director Nakahara of the Sex Industry Museum and R-san says she'll compile my poems like this and publish a collection.

I am truly grateful.

If such a collection comes to fruition, I'd like to present it to those who read this "Talking Theater."

2010.2.20

濡木痴夢男のおしゃべり芝居 第百十八回

Nureki Chimuo's Talking Theater Chapter 118

劇場にて

At the Theater

The light shifted from a bright rose color to a slightly darker bluish light, and next to appear on stage was Inariyama Konjuro.

He was tall, like many young people today, with slender, long limbs, and he looked quite handsome.

The outer corners of both eyes were slightly upturned and his jawline was narrow.

He wore a kimono with a lilac-colored ground and white floral patterns, a dark navy obi tied smartly, white tabi socks on his feet, and a folding fan in his right hand. The song was, “No matter what hardships may come my way, I’ll brave the rough waves and weather the storms, I’ll love on without defeat.”

It was a song expressing a man’s resolve.

The concept seemed to be dancing the emotions of a strong man while wearing effeminate, flashy costumes.

At the song’s climax, Inariyama Konjuro rolled up his kimono sleeves to his shoulders, baring his arms near the shoulders, and struck a dramatic pose.

Each time he nailed that pose, a female voice from the audience called out, “Kon-chaaaaan!” He was a popular actor.

I quickly grew bored with that dance.

I have a mean eye for those who perform the arts.

People have told me I’m stubborn.

Glancing at the stage, I leaned close to the ear of Rakka-san sitting to my left and whispered, "This man's dance is all form, no heart."

Before I even voiced that criticism, she must have been thinking the same thing.

She didn't nod, she kept her face fixed straight ahead toward the stage.

Then, Konjuro's dance became even more painful for me to watch.

I couldn't bear to look anymore.

So, I whispered in Rakka-san's ear again.

"This dance is like those modern SM magazines. It has all the outward trappings, all the flashy poses and showy moves, but the soul is missing." I also said this.

"No matter how beautiful the printing or how lavish the content appears at first glance, if the people putting together the pages have no soul, they'll never truly capture the reader's heart. The worst thing about that magazine is how the editors look down on their readers. But the editors don't even realize it. They think they're serving the readers wholeheartedly. Yet the more they think that, the more condescending the content becomes."

Rakka-san's eyes, however, remained fixed on the stage.

I couldn't raise my voice any louder either.

The surrounding audience seats had eyes and ears.

I took Rakka-san's right hand in my left.

She sat with her coat neatly folded on her lap.

Beneath that coat lay both her hands.

I slipped my left hand under the coat and clasped her right hand.

The surrounding audience couldn't see.

Inariyama Konjuro's dance continued. Now, with vigorous momentum, he stripped off one sleeve, baring his shoulder, stamped his foot, and struck a dramatic pose.

With my left hand, I grasped her right thigh.

I savored the youthful elasticity of her thigh with my five fingers.

Her lower body was tightly wrapped in black fabric pants.

I spread all five fingers of my left hand to feel the curve of her thigh, squeezing and pressing to enjoy the sensation.

The warmth of her lower body traveled from my fingers to my wrist, up to my arm, reaching my heart.

The warmth and elasticity of her thigh became my immediate pleasure.

I immersed myself in the fantasy of embracing her entire body.

No, it wasn't a fantasy. It was real.

Though her face was turned toward the stage, my heart was intoxicated, completely detached from the dance.

She didn't move.

She makes no attempt to avoid the silent intrusion of my hand.

She doesn't try to stop the movements of my palm and fingers, now imbued with even greater intensity of passion. She simply sits straight, accepting it.

She accepts it, but she doesn't react. Not even the slightest flicker.

Her silent stillness makes it seem as if she, too, finds pleasure in the unreasonable movements of my right hand.

That's it. She must be feeling it as pleasure.

But, Rakka-san is someone who doesn't react to pleasure as pleasure.

Even if she feels pleasure, she doesn't express it openly.

She is a woman who considers it vulgar to react openly and unashamedly.

That is precisely what I find so appealing.

Women who feel pleasure as pleasure, become clingy, and press themselves close, I actually can't bring myself to like them.

I find such women tiresome. I suppose I'm just twisted.

This kind of contact, in this kind of place, that I perform on her, it isn't the first time.

I've experienced it several times in the past.

It's been about four years since Rakka and I became close, but counting the times we've gone together to theaters, movies, and other event halls, it must be dozens, no, probably over a hundred times by now.

Anyway, we go to those kinds of places quite frequently.

"You know, when I get bored watching movies or plays, I have this habit of running my hands all over the woman next to me." I think I told her something like that when we first met.

Of course, I wouldn't do such a shameless thing in situations where other patrons might notice.

Because we carefully select the movies, plays, and other events we go to see beforehand, in our own way.

Or rather, our tastes are quite skewed compared to the mainstream. We avoid anything that seems likely to be boring from the start.

So we rarely get bored, but we also seldom encounter anything that keeps us tense throughout the entire thing.

When a boring scene drags on and I can't stand it anymore, my hand starts fidgeting, all the while checking the surrounding situation.

The elasticity of her thigh is good. It's intoxicating.

The softness of the curve near the top of her thigh is good.

I trace the inside of her thigh meticulously with the tips of my fingers. I savor the supple elasticity with the pads of my fingers. My soul is sucked into the space between her inner thighs.

Though all eyes in the audience are fixed on the stage, this is a thrilling act, and thus the sensual pleasure is supreme.

It's more than just a way to stave off boredom.

Applause erupted from the audience.

Inariyama Konjuro's dance had ended.

Even if his soul couldn't be felt, he danced earnestly in his own way. In short, he was inexperienced.

Applause of appreciation. The audience at this theater is kind.

I slipped my left hand out from under the coat draped over Rakka-san's lap.

She showed no reaction whatsoever as I withdrew it.

The lighting and music changed, and next to appear was the troupe's leader.

It was an onnagata dance, portraying an older woman in a period piece.

A kimono of deep purple, adorned with navy-blue birds in flight, a color scheme that was rather subdued. A pure white nagajuban. White tabi socks.

Within the quiet movements lay the heart of a woman tormented by forbidden love. Her entire being was enveloped in emotion, leaving no gaps. The birds within the costume's design seemed to stir to life.

Even the tips of the fingers reaching toward the sky conveyed the agonized nerves of a woman in love. It was dignified and magnificent.

Rakka-san really likes this actor. I was dragged here by her.

"In the end, dance is an expression of the soul, isn't it..." It was obvious, yet I marveled and murmured softly, loud enough for Rakka-san to hear.

The dance of the onnagata, the troupe leader, poured her soul entirely into every movement of her body. It was a movement that concealed within it the passion of a woman yearning for a man.

That artistry lay in the alluring charm that, though restrained, overflowed outward, captivating the audience.

The dance of the still young Inariyama Konjuro, however, was conscious of the audience, striking poses to please them, an art, you might say, performed with a condescending air.

In contrast, the leading lady's onnagata performance portrayed the intense, heart-wrenching passion of a woman's love purely from within. That was what captured the hearts of the viewers.

There was not the slightest hint of that overbearing, condescending gaze.

After watching the entire show, I shook hands with the troupe leader. “Good work,” I said.

Then, I went with Rakka-san to Komegata Dozeu, where we had a bowl of loach hot pot, a cup of sake, and dinner.

As she ate the loach hot pot, “delicious,” Rakka-san said with a smile.

The pleasant stimulation and excitement we felt from that troupe’s passionate performance still lingered within us.

From Komegata Dozeu to JR Asakusabashi Station, we walked hand in hand through the night streets, now dark.

I recalled walking this same path chatting with both R-san and Nakahara Rutsu-san.

The street is called Edo-dori.

When we parted at the station, I always bowed to Rakka-san and said, “Thank you for your company today.”

It wasn’t just a formality. I truly meant it.

I never once spoke to Rakka-san, R-San, or Nakahara Rutsu-san from a position of superiority.

No matter how old I am, I never considered myself “superior” from the start.

A week later, I met Rakka-san again.

And, as usual, we talked about all sorts of things.

We suddenly started talking about how we’d walked hand in hand, chatting all the way from Komegata Dozeu to Asakusabashi Station.

“That was fun,” she said, her big eyes sparkling and her voice full of joy.

More than seeing the show, more than eating the loach hotpot, those fifteen minutes walking to the station were the most enjoyable. That was the tone of her words.

“Then, let’s walk again,” I said.

2010.3.27

濡木痴夢男のおしゃべり芝居 第百十九回

Nureki Chimuo's Talking Theater Chapter 119

目くそが鼻くそを笑ってはいけないけど

Don't Let the Pot Call the Kettle Black

Mizuki Kageo-sama

It's been a while.

I'm still doing well.

Yesterday and the day before, I visited the Sex Industry Museum both days.

Upon returning home from the museum yesterday, I received word from Director Nakahara Rutsu that Mizuki-san had just called, expressing concern that new drafts of my "Talking Theater" and "Secret Bondage Stories" haven't appeared online lately. I gratefully acknowledged her concern.

As you likely heard from Director Nakahara, I'm still running around every single day, doing all sorts of things.

This "all sorts of things" actually covers such a wildly broad range that, at times, I'm at a loss as to how to handle it all. Even though it's the result of my own actions, I find myself somewhat perplexed and even in a state of confusion.

However, ultimately, these are seeds I sowed myself, and there's no choice but to patiently deal with them one by one.

Regarding recent developments, online I'm serializing "Nureki Chimuo's Testament of Obscene Pleasure" at a site called Web Sniper.

True to its title, this is an experimental endeavor where I'm writing to see how far I can expose my most shameful, yet profoundly life-affirming acts.

I'm also writing a serialized essay titled "Dear Sir, This is Nureki Chimuo, Your Bondage Specialist" for the magazine "SM Net."

This piece offers my thoughts, or rather, my criticism on the current state of “commercial bondage,” written with plenty of sarcasm and, of course, from a negative standpoint.

The title signifies that I am not some “master rope artist,” but merely a hired “bondage specialist” on a photo shoot.

It embodies my feeling that people who pompously call themselves “rope masters,” adding the honorific “master” to their name, are untrustworthy.

No matter how negatively or sarcastically I rant, it won’t change the current state of “commercial SM,” where scenes of immediately stripping women naked, binding their limbs in extended or rigid positions to create acrobatic shapes, and inserting foreign objects into their crotches reign supreme.

I know that. But I have no desire to go along with that trend either. So here I am, muttering away and writing this sort of thing.

I said I had no desire to go along with that trend, but I carelessly wrote that. Yet on the shoot, I spread and bind the female body exactly as the employer orders. So it’s no wonder people think I’m going along with it after all.

If people mock me, saying, “What you say and what you do are different, aren’t they?” Well, that’s just how it is.

Just the other day, I was hired for a certain “commercial SM” shoot and bound a self-proclaimed twenty year old beauty (actually a lovely young lady with striking features, the kind you’d see in TV commercials).

At the climax, that young lady I bound was surrounded by four male actors and proceeded to perform fellatio on them one after another.

It wasn’t forced. She looked delighted, her eyes shining as she licked the man’s genitals.

Watching from the sidelines, I couldn’t understand at all why she had to be bound when she seemed genuinely happy, clearly enjoying it, and actively participating.

She was so pleased, offering no resistance, doing exactly as she was told. So why did the men need to restrict her freedom? What possible reason could they have?

It baffles me completely.

It was unreasonable, absurd, or rather, it was simply unavoidable.

(Perhaps they were aiming for the appeal of an absurd world? Well, now that you mention it, I suppose you could say that...)

There must be a special sensibility, a spiritual world, that I simply cannot comprehend.

Soon, the four men ejaculate simultaneously. She joyfully bathes her face in it, opening her mouth to receive it, even happily sticking out her tongue to lick it up.

As cleanup after the ejaculation, she meticulously licks each of the four men's genitals, from tip to base.

(Here's a little secret. Just before this scene, I use old ropes to bind her. Any rope that gets even a drop of semen on it gets discarded the moment I untie it.)

As the "bondage specialist" hired for this, I've witnessed scenes like this hundreds of times before, right in front of me.

Why must I watch? Because even in such pleasurable moments of intimacy between men and women, if the ropes slacken, it is my duty to adjust them.

The production staff likely strive diligently to provide customers with stimulation and excitement, intense eroticism, but I find nothing sensual about it. It feels like an utter futile passage of time.

To be honest, this scene always plunges me into a feeling of utter despair.

So why do I keep getting hired for such shoots? Well, money is part of it, but when a cute young lady, sparkling and radiant, is bound by me for the very first time, that initial moment of placing the first rope still emits an indescribable, unique, subtle eroticism.

Even women who eagerly take men's huge cocks into their mouths and devour them show a genuinely anxious, frightened, and charmingly fresh reaction only in that instant when they first touch the rope.

That fresh reaction, revealing their true feelings, vanishes within seconds.

Those few seconds remain a precious pleasure for me, and it's that allure that draws me to the shoot whenever I'm called.

Ironically, those few seconds of the most sensual and captivating SM scene for me are never seen by the customers.

They're ignored by the production staff, seen as useless scenes.

But upon reflection (or even without much thought), this very sensitivity of mine must also seem unreasonable and absurd to the average, normal people of the world.

That I secretly find these shootings, with all the gushing cum, licking, and everyone grinning, a bit silly is, in a way, like a pot calling the kettle black.

So, that's my day just the other day. In the end, it turned into my usual complaining.

I feel like I've written about this kind of thing many times before, all over the place.

Maybe I should change my pen name to "Nureki Whiner" (laugh).

Mizuki Kageo-san is one of the people who wrote me a letter after seeing my secret video collection (which I recorded and edited together, taking only the bondage scenes from regular TV dramas) that I've entrusted to the Sex Industry Museum for safekeeping. She said she found it interesting.

She is one of my kindred spirits who agrees with my conviction that, in a word, "shame beauty" is the ultimate pleasure of bondage.

Exactly one year ago, Mizuki-san sent me a letter discussing "shame beauty" in bondage, accompanied by many photographs.

It gave me tremendous courage.

So, feeling reassured, I've gone and written this foolish complaint again, without learning my lesson.

This serves as my report to Mizuki-san that I still possess the energy and stamina to write such complaints.

Writing complaints to clear my mind is surely proof that I'm still alive.

Speaking of stamina, I received a request from someone who published a bondage photo book in America (a splendid collection that suits my taste better than similar Japanese ones. It's also in the archive, Mizuki-san, please take a look). They expressed a desire to see Nureki Chimuo's actual bondage work, so this might happen soon.

If this American comes, I feel I could freely perform the bondage I love right in front of him, without holding back or worrying about anyone else.

Mizuki Kageo-sama.

I look forward to meeting you again soon at the Sex Industry Museum and having another enjoyable conversation about “shame beauty.”

2010.4.2

濡木痴夢男のおしゃべり芝居 第百二十回

Nureki Chimuo’s Talking Theater Chapter 120

懲りずにまた夢を

Undeterred, I Dream Again

Mizuki Kageo-sama.

I have received your communication to me via the Sex Industry Museum.

I understand you also visited the museum almost immediately after I did.

I’m glad to hear you are well.

I must explain a little more about why I caused you concern.

It concerns the discontinuation of “Secret Bondage Stories.”

Before starting that serial, I was quite enthusiastic, thinking this time I could finally fulfill my long-held dream. I wrote down all sorts of wishes in “Secret Bondage Stories.” But as you can see, in the end, the dream remains just a dream, and the project has now stalled.

I’ll refrain from detailing the reasons here, as it would be lengthy and potentially awkward. But actually, I’ve begun to envision a new dream.

(I’m a stubborn fool. I’m amazed at myself, but then again, my name is Nureki Chimuo. The word “Chimuo” carries the meaning of an unattainable dream. It also carries a somewhat self-deprecating implication; a foolish man who endlessly pursues an unattainable dream.)

As I mentioned last time, I’m currently serializing a piece titled “Nureki Chimuo’s Testament of Obscene Pleasure” on a site called Web Sniper.

(Mizuki-san, have you had a chance to read it?)

As detailed in that testament, my dream should now be fully realized.

By ordinary standards, this should be the height of good fortune.

The “real me,” not “Nureki Chimuo,” has achieved one hundred percent, no, two hundred percent, satisfaction, all thanks to Rakka-san.

Yet the blood of the artist who calls himself “Nureki Chimuo” simply won’t stay quiet.

It seems half the blood flowing through my veins is, by fate, that of an artist.

The day my desire to express myself fades and vanishes will be the day I die.

I still feel I can live a little longer.

So, as I mentioned briefly last time, let’s move on to the story of the male bondage enthusiast living in America (I assume he’s American, of course).

Driven by a desire to witness the bondage sessions of me, Nureki Chimuo, he will be visiting Japan in two months.

The story has suddenly taken on a sense of reality.

Explaining the entire sequence of events leading up to this point would be lengthy, so I’ll skip the details and get straight to the point.

This American, whom I’ll call K for now. The fact that K’s tastes and preferences regarding bondage are extremely close to mine is the biggest reason it made me dream again.

If K were just another simple lecher, like those commercial SM producers in some country, who immediately strip women naked, tie them up, spread their legs, and do something to them, I would, of course, refuse immediately.

But that’s not the case.

How do I know this? Because K has published his own shibari photo collection and, about a year ago, sent it to me via the Sex Industry Museum.

It appears to be a self-published work, meticulously curated solely from his personal preferences.

(This photo collection is also available at the Sex Industry Museum, Mizuki-san. Please take a look next time. It clearly shows K's rope fetish.)

Inside, there are quite a few bondage photos reprinted from Japanese publications. It even features work by Itoh Seiu.

There are also bondage photos related to me, including some where I myself am pictured.

K and I exchanged a few letters.

Since I don't understand foreign languages at all, an American woman living in Tokyo named A, acting as K's representative, diligently and sincerely handled the translation and other tasks for our correspondence.

Both A and I were very busy and rarely had chances to meet, so Nakahara Rutsu-san, the museum director, always mediated for us.

I should mention that this visit to Japan by K is being made possible through the meticulous care and cooperation of this American woman, A.

In fact, it seems this A is also a woman with an unusual understanding and interest in Japanese bondage.

I haven't asked A directly about this, so I don't know for certain yet.

A seems to be a top-tier journalist affiliated with a well-known news agency, working on cultural exchange projects while traveling back and forth between the US and Japan. Talking with her, I sense considerable intelligence. I trust her.

Judging solely by the photo book K self-published, K's interest remains solely in the rope itself, unmistakably in kinbaku, and in the emotion and passion emanating from the bound woman. It is precisely this aspect that makes K someone I feel I can call a comrade.

Now, this K has written me a passionate letter expressing a desire to see Nureki Chimuo's rope, and is coming all the way from America.

What do you think?

For someone named "Unfulfilled Dream," it seems inevitable that I'd seize this chance and dream again, despite my better judgement.

This time, I've assembled a reliable, solid team with sharp SM sensibilities and a forward-thinking attitude.

Responding to K's earnest request, I intend to fully channel my energy, bind the model with my rope, and meticulously photograph and document the process.

I've enlisted Yamame Shizu as the photographer, a person with a delicate SM sensibility who captures sharp angles.

For the producer, I asked Director Nakahara. Rutsu-san constantly urges me on, always sternly shaking me awake when I start to slack off.

A will naturally serve as interpreter, ensuring K and I are closely connected in intent. Quick-witted and perceptive, she will be a tremendous asset to the staff. Above all, her deep understanding of SM is a major strength.

For the model, I currently plan to ask Sawato Fuyuki. We haven't negotiated yet, but I sincerely hope she accepts.

For this shoot, I only need to bind the model for K, an American who shares my tastes.

Or perhaps K might also point the camera at the model at times, but the only people present on set will be the staff mentioned above.

K is coming all the way from America solely because he adores my rope bondage technique. This means I can use the ropes freely and uninhibitedly, without worrying about anyone else.

I intend to show him rope that surpasses even the bondage he desires. If we film this, I believe it will become a documentary quite different from anything before.

Frankly, I'm utterly bored with footage that merely explains rope techniques and binding procedures, with the model reacting and acting appropriately to those instructions.

If this shoot goes well, we'll create even more interesting and stimulating footage with this group next time. Yesterday, we had a big discussion around the table at a family restaurant. Myself, Director Nakahara Rutsu, photographer Yamame Shizu, and Saotome Hiromi also participated.

The conversation rapidly escalated, and an unusual fervor rose from the four of us.

I really am a man chasing an unattainable dream, I thought deeply. It felt good, Mizuki Kageo-san.

Or perhaps, this plan of mine might also end up being just another dream.

Even if some reason arises and it gets canceled again, I don't think it's a bad thing to indulge in the pleasure of dreaming like this right now. What do you think?

2010.4.5

濡木痴夢男のおしゃべり芝居 第百二十一回

Nureki Chimuo's Talking Theater Chapter 121

新人SM作家登場！

A New SM Writer Debuts!

Kayako Saeki-san.

Through the hands of Director Nakahara Rutsu of the Sex Industry Museum, I have received your book, "Kayako Saeki Novel Collection Vol. 1."

Thank you for the gift and your letter to me.

The moment I held it in my hands, "Oh wonderful! This is great! What a fantastic book!" I couldn't help but exclaim in front of Director Nakahara.

Of course, these were immediate impressions, the binding, the book's weight. But unlike the horizontal electronic text appearing on a computer or phone, I first felt the solidity, warmth, texture, and thickness of the paper in my fingers. The delicate arrangement of the cover art conveyed the author's soul, a devoted presence. I sensed the author's passionate, pure blood, and my heart began to race.

It's a wonderful cover design. I love it.

Looking at the colophon, the editor and bookbinder are listed as Yamanouchi Sachi and Nakahara Rutsu, and the printer and publisher are the Sex Industry Museum.

Ah, I see. I see.

With these two individuals, who possess such deep understanding, affection, and passion for SM. Participating in the creation of this work, its superb quality is only to be expected.

It's what you'd call a self-published work, and the fact that I don't sense a single trace of commercialism's vulgarity, baseness, or editors' condescending attitude makes me so happy it brings tears to my eyes.

(I intend to write thoroughly someday about the unpleasantness of this condescending attitude among those involved in commercial SM. They don't realize they're looking down on enthusiasts. They're unaware. That's the problem.)

What surprised me further upon checking the colophon was the fact that this entire book, "The Kaeko Saeki Novel Collection," was entirely handmade. Both in the printing and the binding.

Handmade means each and every copy was crafted entirely by hand, from start to finish!

Having worked in publishing for sixty years, I was utterly stunned, almost knocked off my feet, because I'd always believed books required the hands of printers, paper suppliers, and bookbinders. And this handmade book even includes color illustrations.

(I often speak of computers and the internet with a certain hostility, but in this case, I have to acknowledge the power of the computer.)

Holding this book in both hands, quietly opening its pages, and gazing intently at them, the pure "SM spirit" of the people who collaborated on its creation (all women!) comes through powerfully, warming my heart.

I find myself running my fingers over every page, the front and back covers, again and again.

Even if born from electronic text on a computer screen, the charm of words printed on paper is undeniably real.

You can feel the warm, pulsing blood of the writer alive on every page.

"Saeki Kayako's Novel Collection Vol. 1" contains the following four stories.

"Amari Renkuro's Notebook"

"Collectors' Club 'Rina'"

"Spherical Erotic Dream"

"Paradise Under the Desk"

Rather than writing my own impression here, I believe sharing an excerpt from the author's "Afterword" better conveys the depth and intensity of these stories.

However, after reading this collection, I was intensely stimulated, and a jealous-like feeling welled up inside me. I pleaded with Director Nakahara, "I'm going to write a new novel too, so please publish it as a splendid book like this one."

"Sure," Director Nakahara smiled warmly and nodded in agreement.

(But I still haven't even started writing the commissioned work "The World of Minomura Ko" for Kawade Shobo Shinsha. The deadline is looming! So writing a novel is still a long way off. How frustrating!)

The "Afterword" in this collection by Kawako Saeki is incredible. Precisely because it's raw language, it's utterly devastating.

I was overwhelmed.

It reminded me of the group of enthusiasts from the Kitan Club era. Pure, lonely, passionate, and filled with anguish. They were all honest.

Nowadays, even those calling themselves enthusiasts only seem to engage in shameless, frivolous behavior.

I believe those who truly suffer deeply still exist, unchanged from the "Kitan Club" days.

That's precisely why novels like this are so precious. Allow me to share just a small part of that "Afterword" below.

"As I wrote, what emerged was a maiden's dreamlike desire: to be confined by someone who passionately loved me, transformed into a body that served that person's sexuality.

This was the very prototype that underpinned my masochistic fantasies.

'Pain' was converted into 'depth of love,' and imagining this brought pleasure to my flesh. Torn and spread open, reshaped to suit the preferences of the one I thought of as 'God' tormented. I became a sweet 'sacrifice.'

Yukio Mishima's words, 'Beyond torture and servitude lie eternal joy, death, and beauty' (from "The Joy of Torture and Death"), strike me as profoundly true. Only those who reach that 'beyond' know it.

When I relinquish my ego in fantasy and become merely a body to be used, I experience a certain sensation of falling.

To be more precise, in the instant of falling, the soul separates from the body and enters a blissful light unattainable in reality.

Writing a novel is painting that light.

It could be said it is writing my 'sacred story.'"

This collection of short stories was written under the influence of such ideas and thoughts.

Transcribing it character by character like this, even just the "Afterword" is truly remarkable.

A coward like me could never manage such a troublesome task.

I could never love a woman this deeply.

(Not even in my fantasies or delusions.)

Reading Saeki-san's novel made me realize I am, after all, an egoist.

However, several women who subscribed to this collection sent their impression to Director Nakahara, especially the voice of the woman who read "Paradise Under the Desk."

"Even knowing it was a fantasy world, it was a wonderful novel. I couldn't stop the tears from flowing. How moving and wonderful it would be if such a life of love were possible."

In the commentary, the author describes this novel as an "SM pure love story."

I see. I think I understand.

In any case, the woman is constantly loved by the male protagonist and energetically toyed with in various ways.

I don't think I could ever sustain the passion and desire like the "I" in this story.

(But that's probably why it's a fantasy novel, because it's impossible in reality.)

Still, a weakling like me would probably get exhausted just from fantasizing (sorry, I'm a coward).

Which just goes to show how fascinating, stimulating, and wonderful the SM fantasies unfolding in this novel truly are.

In a way, the appeal of SM novels might lie in how far they stray from reality, depicting a world beyond the ordinary.

Also, it stands to reason that the higher the level of pleasure, the greater the fatigue from the act itself.

If you wish to read this book, please contact Director Nakahara of the Sex Industry Museum.

I received it from the author. Thank you very much. It was a great learning experience.

Please release "Volume 2" of the "Saeki Kayako Novel Collection" soon.

Anyone who has read "Volume 1" must be eager to read "Volume 2" too.

I believe readers eagerly awaiting new SM novels are the true SM enthusiasts.

I think enthusiasts who don't read SM novels shouldn't be called enthusiasts. They simply aren't.

I simply cannot believe in enthusiasts lacking imagination or the power of fantasy.

Creating a doujinshi⁷ of SM novels is also one of my dreams.

⁷ Doujinshi is essentially a self-published work, or a fan-made work.

2010.4.14

濡木痴夢男のおしゃべり芝居 第百二十二回

Nureki Chimuo's Talking Theater Chapter 122

「鮮血花かるた」と「つぼみ斬魔剣」

“Bloody Flower Karuta” and “Tsubomi: Demon-Slaying Sword”

Akio Otakuro-sama.

I have indeed received the package containing the various materials.

Thank you very much.

I am deeply grateful for your kind letter to me, and for your thoughtful and intimate essay about me and those around me during my time at “Raina” and “Suspense Magazine.”

The volume of “Bloody Flower Karuta” from the “New Handsome Constable Series Vol. 8,” a rental manga published by Hibari Shobo and written specifically for Haruo Kano, is now a rare and valuable book that is quite difficult to obtain. It appears to be a work from before 1964 (Showa 39). It is a picture story from about fifty years ago.

Additionally, the materials you kindly clipped from the manga magazine “Comic Break” (published by Nihon Bungei-sha), a special issue of “Weekly Manga Goraku,” featuring the first six chapters of “Tsubomi Zanma Ken” serialized by Kanda Yu, are also period-themed manga, much like Haruo Kano’s work.

As mentioned in Otakuro-san’s letter to me, “Tsubomi Zanma Ken” features charmingly depicted young women in loincloths on every page, making it an ambitious and interesting work.

Still, it’s remarkable how well Otakuro-san remembers the contents of my six paperback books published by Kawade Shobo Shinsha.

Both Haruo Kano, who draws soulful bondage scenes, and the beautiful girls in loincloths appearing in Sukekazu Gurote-san’s illustrated stories are introduced within my books.

I’m truly happy that you’ve taken such an interest. Thank you.

Looking at the “Bloody Flower Karuta” by Haruo Kano you sent, I recall the time long ago when Mino Murako and I visited Kano-san’s home in Machiya, Arakawa Ward.

“This rental bookstore author, Haruo Kano, I’ve never met him, but I’m sure he shares our tastes. He knows his SM. Let’s meet him directly and ask him to draw for ‘Uramado.’”

“Yeah, I feel like he’d be a kindred spirit too.”

So I got into the spirit of it too. We took the Keisei train from Ueno, got off at the station called Machiya, and wandered through the narrow alleys, deep into the back alleys, until we finally found Kano-san’s house.

But Kano-san stood firm, chest puffed out and declared, “I’m sorry, but I owe a debt of gratitude to Hibari Shobo. I can’t draw for another magazine.” Like some old warrior, he refused, and in the end he didn’t draw for Uramado.

Recalling Kano-san’s appearance that day, my mind simultaneously revisits those days of pure SM immersion with Minomura Ko.

Those days were spent enduring the relentless, spiteful oppression of those in power who shunned SM, and thus the unforgettable, intensely concentrated days of pleasure shared with Minomura Ko...

Because almost everyone around us was an enemy, it was an era where Minomura Ko and I had to clasp hands tightly together just to survive.

To put it bluntly, even now most of the people around me are like “enemies.”

To be even more blunt, they’re “enemies” wearing the faces of allies.

They approach me saying things like, “I’m a person who shares the same inclinations as you,” but in reality, they are not allies. They may seem similar, but they are fundamentally different. I’ve become extremely cautious. I never lower my guard around people like this.

Otakuro-san, who remembered those few lines I wrote long ago about “Fundoshi Bishoujo” and went to the trouble of cutting out and compiling several comic magazines to send me this time, he is undoubtedly an ally.

Seeing the “Bloody Flower Karuta” by the great artist Haruo Kano that Otakuro-san sent me, it really is good. It’s interesting.

Within a single picture story, there are only a few bondage scenes. Yet, within those small, paneled spaces, the four or five scenes of torment possess an indescribable charm and emotional depth.

The bound woman, of course, remains fully clothed in her kimono, restrained with her hands bound in a takate kote using a shigoki (a type of rope).

The position of her wrists, looped high across her back is unbearably good. It's sensual from an SM perspective.

Kano Sensei clearly poured his heart into drawing these scenes.

That passion becomes an intense emotion that resonates with the viewer. You can see the meticulous care taken with the woman's expression, rendered with such detail that even each individual eyelash is carefully drawn.

Her large eyes, glistening with tears, are filled with a plump, moist resentment that is utterly endearing.

Hmm, I've seen this mood somewhere before. It feels familiar, vividly familiar. Then it hit me. It bears a striking resemblance to the atmosphere when Rakka-san was bound by me.

(Though Rakka-san, whenever I bind her, invariably loses half her consciousness, her body going limp, her eyes closing. So while the facial shape differs slightly from the wide-eyed beauty in Master Kano's painting, the overall atmosphere, the eroticism radiating from her entire body through the ropes, is identical.)

Minomura Ko and I spent the whole day visiting Kano Sensei. On the train ride back, we discussed this.

"There's definitely a masochistic obsession within Kano-san, specifically with bondage. He himself isn't the least bit aware of it. It's fascinating that he paints these emotionally charged rope paintings without any conscious awareness."

I completely agreed with Minomura Ko's observation.

No matter how consciously an artist tries to paint for enthusiasts, if they lack that heart, their work will never truly capture the essence of SM.

Conversely, some artists create illustrations that delight enthusiasts without ever realizing it themselves.

The same principle applies to writing, specifically to novels.

(Back when I edited SM magazines, three or four artists or writers would pitch their work to the editorial office every month. Talking with them really brought this point home.)

To put it another way, in commercial SM, no matter how enthusiastically or roughly the ropes are applied, if the person holding them lacks that heart, the bondage won't convey the sensuality or pleasure of SM.

(This becomes clear when you look at the photographs by Minomura Ko published in Uramado. These are photos where Minomura Ko bound the women himself and then pressed the shutter. They use just a single rope for a light bind, yet they possess a truly rich, sensual SM flavor and a wonderful atmosphere.)

The other historical manga Otakuro-san sent me was "Tsubomi: Demon-Slaying Sword."

To be perfectly honest, I think the artistic technique here is several levels more sophisticated than that of Master Kano. I believe the artist is young, but the artwork is quite skilled.

Above all, it feels modern. Fresh. The lines depicting the female form are slender, flowing freely, and dynamic.

The lines used by Master Kano to depict the female form are somehow more relaxed and heavy. The number of poses is also limited.

"Tsubomi: Demon-Slaying Sword," published in 2009, is naturally more contemporary than Master Kano's work from fifty years ago. It is boldly erotic throughout, as if saying, "Here it is, and here it is again."

The heroines drawn by Kanda Yu quickly strip down to just a loincloth and engage in fierce combat with their enemies.

The depictions of the loincloth from various angles are sensual, and even from a general perspective it's a sexy and enjoyable picture story.

It's rare to see the figure of a beautiful girl in a loincloth appear so frequently and from such stimulating angles within a picture story, making it thoroughly valuable as reference material.

It's only natural that Otakuro-san felt compelled to carefully cut these out and send them to me.

The enemies attacking the heroine are all supernatural beings, snake women, spider women, tengu, all using sinister magic.

The tengu man uses his tall, long nose as a weapon, thrusting it into the beautiful girl's crotch over her fundoshi.

Naturally, the heroine's limbs are bound, leading to a succession of scenes where she faces imminent danger.

These bondage scenes are also depicted with meticulous detail, sensuality, and skill. Scenes likely to delight the general reader unfold one after another, proving Kanda Yu to be quite the storyteller.

If you say this is SM too, well it certainly is. But to be harsh, I feel it lacks a certain "flavor."

Perhaps it's that I wish the depiction of the loincloth had just a bit more of that nuanced depth, that kind of obsessive attention to detail you'd expect from a true enthusiast.

I wish the loincloth itself had a bit more qualitative three-dimensionality.

If I'm being greedy, I would have liked an explanation or depiction of the psychology behind why this heroine always wears a loincloth.

If that were done, I guarantee this would become a fan-oriented picture story worthy of a very high score.

Of course, even as it is, it undoubtedly serves as excellent reference material for "beautiful girls in fundoshi."

Once again, my sincere thanks. Thank you very much.

After treasuring and appreciating it thoroughly, I will entrust it to the Sex Industry Museum alongside Master Artist Haruo Kano's "Bloody Flower Karuta."

2010.4.20

濡木痴夢男のおしゃべり芝居 第百二十三回

Nureki Chumuo's Talking Theater Chapter 123

おそろべき退廃美

Awe-inspiring Decadent Beauty

Why do audiences flock to this three-and-a-half-hour show performed in this small theater with such fervor and frenzied passion?

It's a question I've been asking myself for quite some time.

Though I've wondered about it, I've never given it much thought. I myself am quite a fan of this stage, even if I wouldn't go so far to call myself a die-hard fan.

The audience is drawn in because it has a certain charm. Sometimes, they come even at the cost of their own well-being.

To me, ever since I was a child, this has been a scene that could almost be called common sense.

I had grown accustomed to encountering this scene.

So, I never thought it was worth pondering why people gathered here.

Their appeal has endured for so many years that it could almost be called traditional.

I had grown accustomed to their charm and their talent, and I had also grown accustomed to the sight of fans supporting them with such frenzied passion.

Therefore, I never harbored any particular doubts about the true nature of their appeal, which could even be called mysterious.

Watching them today, I feel like that mystery has been solved, just a little bit.

To put it simply, the audience gathers here, captivated by the decadent beauty of the gypsy troupe performing on this stage.

A decadent beauty that looms over the audience, brought to life by the gypsies' overwhelming expressiveness.

I say "gypsies," but I am by no means looking down on them. I do not harbor a shred of contempt.

I respect and admire them from the bottom of my heart. That is why I use the honorific title. I love them. If I were just a little younger, I would gladly work as their assistant and travel with them from one place to the next. I long for that.

Let's try looking up the word "gypsy" in the dictionary.

"Gypsy": An ethnic group originating from northwestern India that has wandered throughout Europe. They excel in dance and music, and make their living through storytelling, fortune-telling, and the like. People who do not settle in one place. People who lead a nomadic life. (Obunsha Japanese Dictionary)

"Gypsy": A nomadic people scattered throughout Europe. They live in horse-drawn wagons. The men make a living through metalwork, while the women do so through fortune-telling, and they enjoy music and dance. Bohemians. (Iwanami Japanese Dictionary)

Ah, what a romantic, free-spirited people they must be!

Let me make this clear (though it feels strange and silly to make such a disclaimer here): the performers who put on the three-and-a-half-hour show that never ceases to fascinate me are, without a doubt, Japanese.

In fact, you could say they are the most quintessentially Japanese, the most traditional Japanese people you'll find today (after all, they can slip into a kimono with ease and tie their obi stylishly all by themselves).

Since I've gone so far as to describe the "decadent beauty" of this gypsy troupe, I'll take this opportunity to look up the word "decadence" in the dictionary.

"Decadence": To fall into ruin; desolation. Moral disorder, fragility, and unhealthiness. Decadent. (Obunsha Japanese Dictionary)

It says that, but hmm, this interpretation isn't quite right. It doesn't match my image of it. Let's look it up in the Iwanami Japanese Dictionary instead.

"Decadence": The collapse of morality and wholesome values. The resulting pathological atmosphere. (Iwanami Japanese Dictionary)

Hmm, this doesn't quite fit either. It feels a bit different from something described as a "pathological atmosphere." Decadence, huh? Alright, then let's look up "decadence" in the Kojien.

"Decadence": Meaning decay or moral decline. A literary movement that emerged primarily in France in the late 19th century. Characterized by nihilism and aestheticism, with a preference for the morbid and the macabre. Pioneered by Baudelaire and represented by Verlaine, Rimbaud, and the British writers Swinburne and Wilde. It also generally refers to nihilistic and decadent artistic tendencies or attitudes toward life.

"Decadent": An artist of the Decadent movement. A person who lives according to nihilistic, decadent emotions. Also, such a state or manner. (Kojien)

Yeah, well, I feel like this one is a bit closer.

But still, maybe it's not quite right.

I just can't see their work as being very nihilistic.

Far from being nihilistic, they are exceptionally diligent and hardworking. To please the customers right in front of them, they seem to spare no effort, even sacrificing sleep, exposing their own shame, and giving their all to the point of wearing themselves out.

I think both their work and personal lives exist in an extremely harsh environment.

It's a bit of a hassle, but let's look up "nihilism" in the dictionary again.

"Nihilism": The state of having nothing; emptiness. Void. Specifically, the absence of anything of value or substance. Or, the "nothingness" that is the root of all things.

"Nihilism": A tendency and doctrine that denies reality, truth, and all existing institutions and authorities. (Iwanami Japanese Dictionary)

No, no, that's ridiculous, it's completely different.

Those people are definitely not nihilists.

It seems they don't even have time to eat. Today, I saw them performing on stage while slurping some kind of slimy energy drink right in front of the audience.

I sense a certain decadence in the act of exposing oneself like that in front of the audience and turning it into part of the performance, but I don't think it's nihilistic.

They manage to turn even that into an "art" and delight the audience.

They drag the audience's hearts into the beauty of decadence and force them into a state of intoxication.

What astonished me most today was when, during the play (and in a period drama, no less, complete with topknots), three characters grabbed a sake bottle with their left hands and took a swig of the water inside.

It was a play in which the main character, the ronin Nakayama Yasubei, along with the residents of the tenement house, were about to rush out to Takeda no Baba to duel with their enemy swordsmen.

Just as the actors on stage were speaking their lines and took a sip of water, a dozen or so audience members sitting in the front rows suddenly raised white towels above their heads with both hands.

At the same moment, the actors aimed at those towels and "Pffff" spat out the water they had taken into their mouths.

They didn't do it just once. They took water from the sake bottle into their mouths again and again, repeating the action.

The water mixed with saliva, spat from the actors' mouths, rained down like mist onto the heads of the audience members from the front row to about the fourth row.

The packed auditorium erupted in laughter, with people rolling on the floor and shrieking with delight.

I was completely taken aback.

The dozen or so audience members seated in the front rows had been handed towels beforehand.

Sitting in the back, I had no idea when they'd been handed out.

The audience members who had received the towels were prepared to use them to shield themselves from the water the actors would spit out.

That meant they knew that, as part of this play, the actors would take a mouthful of water and spit it forcefully toward the audience.

Had the audience, intoxicated by the decadent beauty of this troupe, flocked to the venue before the performance even began simply because they wanted to be hit by that water?

And had they taken their seats in the first four or five rows to wait for it?

Unaware of any of this, Rakka-san (she was there too!) and I, sitting in the back row, a dozen or so rows away from the stage, could do nothing but marvel.

It wasn't just the audience members who got drenched. Every single person in the packed theater had been seamlessly woven into the staging of this period drama.

(And to think, this production of "The Duel at Takada no Baba" was a one night only performance!)

This gypsy troupe performed plays and shows at this theater for just one month (twenty-nine days, to be exact), and once the month changed, they vanished from our sight.

They performed twice a day, once in the afternoon and once at night, with completely different plays and shows each time. In other words, over the course of twenty-nine days, they performed fifty-eight different plays and shows before leaving this place and moving to other regions.

While there are undoubtedly passionate fans known as "chase fans," it is hard to imagine a hundred or two people actually following a traveling gypsy troupe from one performance venue to the next.

(Or perhaps there really are such fans. I don't know. Seeing that frenzied enthusiasm, maybe there are.)

Neither Rakka-san nor I could ever manage to be "chasing fans," so we can only see this troupe about once a year.

No matter how much we favor this troupe, we simply cannot see them.

Well, I've gone on quite a tangent, but I must explain the decadent beauty that the actors of this troupe portray on stage.

I haven't written a single word yet about what exactly constitutes this decadent beauty.

If I don't explain it, my readers will likely remain unconvinced.

But even now, I still hesitate. Even if I want to write about the decadent beauty of these people, my limited expressive ability makes it difficult.

I believe the charm of this troupe lies in its decadent beauty, and at times, in its perverse beauty.

If you'll forgive me for taking a leap here, I think it's fair to call the people who like these actors and the roles they play a kind of "enthusiast."

Furthermore, perhaps the reason Rakka-san and I feel such an extraordinary kinship with the people who gather at this theater is that we sense their warmth as "enthusiasts" of decadent beauty.

I have not yet written about the most crucial aspect. The decadent beauty that this troupe expresses with such passion and conveys to the audience.

I also think it would be too simplistic to simply label it as "decadent beauty."

However, describing the mysterious beauty of those people is truly difficult. It is beyond my capabilities. Whether it is seen as simplistic or shallow, given my abilities, I have no choice but to call it "decadent beauty."

It is precisely because of the actors' otherworldly, eerily made-up beauty that the audience cries out and holds up towels with both hands to catch the water spewing from their mouths.

I must write about the hearts of those audience members.

Actually, tomorrow I'm going to see another gypsy troupe's show with Rakka-san.

It's in a building on the eastern edge of Tokyo, different from the venue we usually go to. The Edogawa River flows right nearby.

It was Rakka-san who invited me there.

These days, Rakka-san is the one who's become obsessed with the gypsy troupe.

Tomorrow, we'll be cooped up inside that building all day and night, watching the gypsy troupe. We'll immerse ourselves in that terrifying show.

I will carefully observe the decadent beauty of perversion.

2010.4.23

濡木痴夢男のおしゃべり芝居 第二百二十四回

Nureki Chimuo's Talking Theater Chapter 124

三日月半詩郎の尻

Hanshiro Mikazuki's Butt

The host, Hanshiro Mikazuki, appears to the tune of an [enka](#) melody and dances with confidence, moving his arms and legs with ease.

Just as he turned his back to the audience at the perfect spot in the center of the stage and gave his hips a little wiggle, I got an erection as if struck by lightning.

It was because the shape of Hanshiro's butt and the way he moved it were just too sexy.

With his back still turned to the packed audience, he moved only his butt in time with the rhythm.

At the same time, he twists just his face to glance at the audience. That fleeting, sidelong glance is terrifyingly alluring.

With the confident look in his eyes and the movement of his buttocks, he scatters an utterly bewitching eroticism throughout the audience.

That said, Hanshiro is not naked.

Hanshiro is a male actor.

He does play female roles, but right now he's dancing in men's attire. I had gotten an erection from a man's butt.

The dancing Hanshiro wore a single-layered kimono of deep navy blue, left open, with a pale yellow sash.

On the back of the kimono is a large white carp, dyed in a pose with its tail boldly arched upward. That white carp writhes seductively, as if it were alive.

At the change in the song's melody, his dance pose freezes.

At the same moment, a woman's voice rises from the audience.

"Han-chan!"

"Zachou!"⁸

"Hanshiro-chan!"

A woman in her fifties sitting diagonally in front of me shifted in her seat, leaning forward, "Hanshiro! Hanshiro!" calling him by his first name.

Her cries gradually grew higher and sharper, becoming almost like screams or shrieks.

However, no matter how enthusiastic their cheers may seem, I get the feeling that the women who support this troupe retain a certain level of detachment.

Perhaps it's because many of them seem to have experienced the hardships of life.

This show goes on for an hour and fifteen minutes without a break.

Led by the troupe leader, Hanshiro Mikazuki, the eight or so members take turns changing costumes and wigs as they dance.

Each person dances for about five minutes on average. One song, though there are also performances by pairs of men and women. Sometimes three or four members appear simultaneously, performing in dramatic choreography.

The show is staged to keep the audience engaged. There are three female performers, each dancing with skillful grace. These actresses also receive applause from the audience.

The one who appears most frequently and dances most boldly in this Mikazuki troupe show is the troupe leader, Hanshiro.

In the second half, Hanshiro takes on female roles. He transforms into a young girl, a mature woman, a geisha, and even a courtesan, changing costumes and wigs as he dances energetically to the music.

No matter what he dances, he never cuts corners. The eroticism radiating from his entire body fills the stage with an increasingly alluring aura.

⁸ 座長, Zachou, means troupe leader.

Even if it appears as though he is pandering to the audience, one can sense an unyielding tension running through his very core. I feel that this is what upholds the dignity of his art.

A regular patron rises from his seat, bends at the waist, and approaches the edge of the stage. He beckons the dancing performer right up to him. Extending one hand, he slips a prepared envelope containing a monetary gift into the performer's chest.

The performer offers thanks in a low voice, yet with eyes brimming with emotion, and extends both hands to grasp the patron's hand, cradling it gently.

And then he subtly and skillfully returns to the dance routine. This is repeated over and over again.

While dancing, the performers are constantly focused on the movements of their regular patrons.

There are times when I wonder if they are aware of every single face and expression of the two hundred people filling the audience.

The auditorium is dark, yet they possess eyes that can see even in the dark. And their senses are as keen as those of a swiftly moving insect.

Hanshiro's popularity is, as expected, remarkably outstanding. Patrons holding gift envelopes rise from their seats one after another and approach the stage, resting one hand on its edge. At times, these patrons even form a line.

Hanshiro approaches the patrons while dancing, kneels on the stage, and accepts the gift envelopes.

He thanks them in a voice inaudible to the other audience members, bows his head slightly, shakes the guest's hand, and then returns to his dance. There is not a single flaw in this sequence of movements.

I am always moved by the way he presents this, shaking the guest's hand, as a "performance." I sometimes even feel a sense of awe at the fact that there is no trace of vulgarity in these movements.

I do not know the exact amount inside the envelopes. I remember a time when, instead of putting them in envelopes, ten or twenty 10,000 yen bills were left exposed and hung from the actor's neck down to their chest as decoration. That was not so long ago.

Ahh, if only I had a lot of money, I too would like to offer it to Hanshiro Mikazuki in that manner.

Hanshiro's onnagata performance is so beautiful it makes me tremble. No, Hanshiro transcends the categories of woman or man. He is erotic. He is so beautiful and sexy that he seems otherworldly.

Hanshiro is tall.

He might be over 180 centimeters. When he dresses as a woman and wears a wig, he becomes even taller.

A large physique is generally considered a disadvantage for a female impersonator. A woman must be petite and cute.

However, because he is so incredibly alluring, Hanshiro's tall stature is not a drawback. Enveloped in a radiance of eroticism that transcends common sense, his captivating presence becomes overwhelming every time he appears in a new costume.

(Damn it!)

I let out a groan in my heart.

No matter how stylish and seductive his geisha costume may be, no matter how he dances while casting intense, lingering glances, isn't Hanshiro a man? He is not a woman.

No matter how much sex appeal he exudes or how sensually he dances, there must be a penis between that geisha's legs. Since his body is so massive, his penis must surely be huge as well.

(Damn it!)

What could possibly be the psychology behind these women, clapping and cheering so wildly for Hanshiro Mikazuki as he dances in geisha attire, hiding that massive penis?

Is it precisely because he is a beautiful woman with a penis that the women go wild?

In the minds of the women who shout in ecstasy, what place does Hanshiro's penis occupy?

Is this not perversion itself?

If we delve deeper into this perverted sense of ecstasy, where will it lead us?

Naturally, there should be no penis like Hanshiro's inside the geisha costume worn by the actress as she dances.

When an actress without a penis dances, no matter how beautifully she is dressed, no envelopes of money will fly from the audience. No matter how skillfully she dances, the audience will offer nothing but applause.

I remembered.

A conversation I had with Minomura Ko one day, some fifty-odd years ago.

“...Suma-san (Minomura Ko’s real name), lately, when I have sex with a woman, I keep getting this image where I’ve become a woman with a vagina and am being penetrated by the man. When I insert my penis into a woman’s vagina, it’s not me doing the penetrating, it’s another man, and at that moment, my body has become a woman with a vagina. In reality, I’m the one inserting my penis into her vagina, but in my imagination, I’m the woman spreading my legs and having a penis inserted into me. And when I have sex with that image in mind, it feels really good, though...”

I don’t know if Minomura Ko understood what I was saying.

I couldn’t even understand this sensation I was describing myself.

I thought that even if I tried to explain this image to an ordinary person, they wouldn’t understand it at all. But I wanted to tell someone.

I thought Minomura Ko wouldn’t understand it either. This perverse sensation is too extreme.

But Minomura Ko was someone I could talk to about anything. In reality, I feel like I spoke about my image in a much more roundabout way.

Minomura Ko, however, understood immediately and responded.

He stared intently at my face and said with a serious expression.

“...Is that so? That’s good. That’s a good thing. You really are the real deal, aren’t you? I understand perfectly. Without that kind of sensibility, you couldn’t edit this magazine.”

This was around the time I took on the editing of “Uramado,” so I think it was around 1960, the 35th year of the Showa era.

Actually, when the show began that day, and Hanshiro Mikazuki appeared and turned around to shake his butt while dancing, I immediately recalled a conversation I'd had with Minomura Ko fifty years ago.

Why did that memory from fifty years ago suddenly resurface when I saw Hanshiro's butt?

I don't know.

Rakka-san was sitting next to me, as usual.

It was Rakka-san who invited me to join this Makazuki troupe. Rakka-san is even more obsessed with this gypsy troupe than I am.

While watching the stage, I wrapped my right arm around Rakka-san's hips and stroked her.

2010.4.24

濡木痴夢男のおしゃべり芝居 第百二十五回

Nureki Chimuo's Talking Theater Chapter 125

春之介もまた美しい

Shunnosuke is Beautiful As Well

I finished writing “Mikazuki Hanshiro’s Butt” and immediately faxed it to Rakka-san.

I reread it once more, and about thirty minutes later, I sent the manuscript to R-san.

If I don’t send it to R-san, it can’t be posted on the “Talking Theater” section of the website.

(I’m not really sure if it’s called “posting” or “publishing,” though.)

R-san has been handling everything related to the website flawlessly for the past four years (or is it five now?)

I don’t do anything (or rather, I can’t).

As always, I don’t understand a thing about IT.

I don’t even try to understand it. I don’t even own a cell phone yet.

Even without one, I don’t really feel any inconvenience.

R-san is, so to speak, my personal, excellent proofreader. Not only does she catch typos and missing characters, but she also accurately points out parts where the meaning is unclear. She’s a truly invaluable person.

Rakka-san read “Mikazuki Hanshiro’s Butt” right away (just fifteen minutes after I finished writing it, what an age of enlightenment!) and called me.

Before she could say anything, I jumped the gun and offered an excuse.

“It’s no good. I couldn’t possibly capture the intense presence of that troupe with my limited expressive abilities. It turned out half-baked.”

"Not at all. It was interesting," Rakka-san said in her usual clear tone. Perhaps she was trying to comfort me.

"I haven't portrayed Hanshiro at all. Hanshiro's charm isn't like that," I said. It wasn't modesty, it was my genuine feeling.

"I think you captured him quite well," Rakka-san said.

"Do you really?" I wanted her to praise me even more.

Come to think of it, I had started writing this "Talking Theater" precisely because I wanted her to praise me.

"I know because I've seen Hanshiro on stage, but I think people who haven't seen him in person will read it and find it interesting, imagining all sorts of things based on your writing alone," Rakka-san said, calm as ever.

"Well, as a distinguished member of the Naoki Prize selection committee once said, writing, not just novels, shouldn't force a specific heart or form upon others. After presenting the bare minimum, it should be left to the reader's imagination." I continued my half-hearted excuse.

"The actor Hanshiro has a certain dark shadow not just on his face, but over his entire body. You yourself said right after seeing his performance that you sensed a strange, decadent beauty in that, didn't you? I didn't feel that dark shadow in the Hanshiro you portrayed. Instead, I felt like Shunosuke's aura was a bit muddled," Rakka-san said.

"Ah, I see. Now that you mention it, you're right."

Shunosuke is a young onnagata in the Mikazuki Troupe, and apparently he's only eighteen.

With her striking features and cute looks, in terms of conventional beauty, she's more fresh and beautiful than Hanshiro.

When Shunosuke appears, the audience is shaken by a different kind of resounding sigh and murmur than when Hanshiro appears.

About ten days ago, when I first saw Shunosuke on stage portraying an Edo-period town girl, I cried out in surprise, leaned close to Rakka-san's ear, and exchanged the following conversation.

“What is that? Is that a man or a woman? What is that beauty? What is that allure? Tell me. What is it? What is it? Is that a woman or a man? Tell me.”

Rakka-san stared straight at the stage, her eyes fixed intently, shaking her head and said, “I don’t know.”

Then, as if to confirm whether it was a man or a woman, she stretched her slender neck and gazed at Shunnosuke.

Shunnosuke was by no means an actor with a masculine aura. Rather, he had a somewhat lonely air about him. Yet, being young, his features were plump and his physique rounded.

In contrast, Mikazuki Hanshiro’s face and body were suffused with a sickly, sharp shadow.

His nose is slender and high, and the flesh of his cheeks is slightly sunken. His lower lip juts out, giving his mouth the appearance of someone who speaks nothing but sarcasm.

However, the sensuality of this lower lip is incredible. If you stare at it, it is a mouth so erotic it makes your head spin.

It would not be surprising if there were women who favored him, fantasizing about having their entire bodies licked by that lower lip, and who, every time they saw him on stage, generously gave him gifts of fifty thousand, one hundred thousand, or even two hundred thousand yen.

While the allure possessed by the young Shunnosuke is undeniably innocent and supple, the dark eroticism exuded by the slender, tall Hanshiro feels as hard as a blade. His entire presence is ruthless.

It was there that I sensed his decadent beauty.

“Hanshiro had a kind of desolate shadow about him,” Rakka-san said on the other end of the phone.

“Yes, that’s exactly right. A sensuality with a desolate shadow. That is decadent beauty.”

It is a desolate sensuality, and that is why decadent beauty permeates his entire being.

In this “Talking Theater,” Rakka-san’s sharp advice occasionally comes through. Saved by her apt counsel, I have been able to keep writing up to this point.

She is always the first to read my manuscripts. I've already written 1800 pages of 400-character manuscript paper. She must have read every single one.

That said, it's not just Hanshiro and Shunnosuke. Everyone in the gypsy troupe is really good at applying makeup.

It would be no exaggeration to say that they focus all their attention and stake their very lives on the techniques to adorn their faces.

When they dance during showtime, each person is a star in their own right, and every single one of them becomes a handsome, dashing leading man.

When dancing in female roles, naturally, they create faces even more beautiful and alluring than those of women.

Poor makeup will cause them to lose their regular patrons. Unless they are beautiful and sexy, the audience won't tip them.

Being skilled at makeup means concealing one's flaws, emphasizing only one's best features, and making oneself appear even more attractive.

And one more thing, they are skilled at choosing and wearing their costumes.

Here, too, one can see the determination of artists who pour all their energy into their craft and stake their entire careers on it. When performing, they undoubtedly wear costumes they have chosen and made themselves to appeal to the audience.

Whether or not one possesses allure on stage depends entirely on how well they wear their costume.

For example, when having a loose-fitting single-layered kimono (hitoe) made, might they not specifically request measurements that make the body width slightly narrower?

This is to tightly and explicitly reveal the shape of their lower body, especially the butt, to the audience's eyes, thereby emphasizing sex appeal.

The reason I was mesmerized by Hanshiro's butt was clearly because, just as he intended, my sensuality was stirred.

The vast majority of people refuse to acknowledge the valiant artistry of performers like this.

Some people shun it, calling it vulgar or base. They are clearly being discriminated against.

The small minority of people who do not consider this artistry to be base or vulgar, who do not look down on it, but instead believe it to be a message from the god of the performing arts, becoming intoxicated and passionately devoted to it, I secretly call them “enthusiasts” in my heart.

I consider them comrades connected at the deepest level of human instinct.

I have known of this gypsy troupe since I was a child. I wrote about this in “Talking Theater” as well. Although it was only for a short time, I was also involved with them.

In fact, it was I who took Rakka-san to the audience of the gypsy troupe.

Until then, she had no idea that such a breed of entertainers existed in this world.

While ordinary people generally prefer and are familiar with the performing arts of the streets, the Gypsy troupe occupies a position somewhat removed from that common sensibility.

She is someone who grew up in an environment completely unrelated to this kind of entertainment.

Therefore, guiding her into a secluded space that one might even call heretical, that stands apart from everyday sensibilities, was, for me, an adventure.

I even feared that showing her this performance might sever the relationship we had maintained so well up until then.

There was a specific reason why I decided to show her the men and women writhing in that intimate space, a space that could by no means be called refined, and their art.

However, explaining that would take too long, so I will leave the details and the sequence of events for later.

For now, I will write briefly.

One evening a few years ago, I took her by the hand and boarded a small boat at a pier along a canal near the sea.

At that time, she was, unusually, in a very bad mood.

The boat set off and approached the disembarkation point located upstream on the river flowing through the city, but her bad mood persisted.

For the sake of her reputation, I should note that the reason for her anger did not stem from the usual, commonplace whims of a woman.

Simply put, her anger arose from being starkly confronted with the reality of buildings constructed solely on utilitarian principles, which laid bare the inhumanity of modern society. It was, so to speak, a social and human indignation.

I tried my best to calm her down.

However, while on the boat, I couldn't think of a way to lure her into that enclosed space.

Eventually, the boat docked at the town's pier and I took her hand again to disembark. But at that moment I suddenly recalled that chaotic yet profoundly human space.

All right, I'll take her there and show her that!

Even if, after I'd dragged her in, she grew even angrier, saying she hated such a filthy, stuffy, smelly, eerie place teeming with all sorts of shady characters, well, that would be a problem for that moment.

I wondered how she would react when she saw it.

In a sense, my feelings at that moment were a kind of gamble.

2010.5.14

濡木痴夢男のおしゃべり芝居 第百二十六回

Nureki Chimuo's Talking Theater Chapter 126

いまが死に時(どき)なんだけど

It's Time for Me to Die, But...

The Talking Theater came to an abrupt halt once again.

R-san's eyes are scary.

I'll explain.

I'm extremely busy right now.

I'm really swamped.

I'm so busy I'm out of R-san's sight.

Long, long ago, my elders warned me not to go around proudly boasting, "I'm so busy I could die..." They said it was a base, vulgar act...

I wondered if there were words like "to act busy" or "to pretend to be busy," so I opened the Kojien dictionary to check, and sure enough, they were there.

"Isogashigaru": To feel busy. To appear busy.

The Kojien did not list the word "isogashiburu."

I seem to recall using it in the same way as "to act superior" or "to act rich."

"That guy's acting all high and mighty for no reason. I can't stand it." Or, "That jerk's acting like he's rich. What a jerk." Or something like that.

By the way, the word "eragaru" (to act arrogant) was in the Kojien.

It means "to think of oneself as great, to act superior, to strut." That's what it means.

About fifty-odd years ago, it was Shozo Numa-san (not the [Shozo Numa](#) commonly spoken of, but the real Shozo Numa-san) who advised me, “Everyone is busy. Don’t go saying you’re busy, just keep serializing ‘The Birth of Yellow Orami.’”

At that time, I truly felt ashamed of myself.

However, I was still very busy at the time and, unable to meet Shozo Numa-san’s expectations, I ended up interrupting the novel I was serializing in Kitan Club.

No, I’m busy right now, so I don’t have time to ramble on about things like this.

But I have to make an excuse.

I have received many letters from various people.

Most of the letters sent to me are what you might call handwritten. They are very carefully written in the sender’s own hand.

And their contents are all serious and heartfelt.

I know I must reply to them, but I simply don’t have the time and I just can’t bring myself to write them.

To those of you waiting for a reply from me, I’m sorry. It’s not that I’m being lazy. Even though I keep telling myself I must write, I just can’t seem to get around to it.

I simply have too much work.

(Ah, here I go again, pretending to be busy!)

But I’m already quite old, and there’s no point in working this hard at my age.

Yet one job after another keeps piling up and there’s simply no way to stop it.

In a book written by a doctor that goes by the title of “End-of-Life Planner,” there’s a passage that says, “The appropriate age for a human to die is around eighty.” I read that and thought, “That makes sense.”

In other words, around eighty is when your mind and body are still sound, and you can pass away peacefully without being a burden to anyone.

An “end-of-life planner” is someone who thinks about and plans how to end one’s life, I suppose.

I am, as it happens, exactly eighty years old right now.

I really shouldn't have to work anymore. It's the ideal age to die.

Essentially, now is the time to die.

So, even if someone asks me to do something, I could just put on airs and say, "I'm at the time to die, so I can't take this on," and stubbornly refuse. But since I was born and raised in Asakusa, I just can't bring myself to say no.

I've always been a frivolous, easygoing sort of person, so when people flatter me, before I know it, I end up agreeing to do it. It's a real problem.

Some jobs pay well, and some don't.

The ones that don't pay are actually more enjoyable.

Even after they're over, the pleasant afterglow lingers for a long time, and there are moments when I think, "I'm glad I took that on."

At times like that, I feel as though my life has been extended by about three years.

Nureki Chimuo's rope does things that would make anyone who doesn't know him fall off their chair in shock, thinking, "Wait, he's doing this too? No way!"

"...At this moment, from beyond the high, high sky, and beyond that, from the far, far reaches of the sky, someone flies in, letting out a loud laugh. Who else could it be but our champion of justice, Golden Bat, wrapped in his red cape. Wahahahaha..."

In fact, I was doing that job, shouting lines like that and laughing out loud just yesterday as well.

A man who, the day before, had been tying up a woman and dripping wax onto her bare breasts, the very next day, "I am the champion of justice, Golden Bat!"

Who could possibly imagine the sight of him screaming, yelling, and laughing until his sides shook in front of a large audience.

But, in reality, that's exactly what he's doing.

He's doing it because he finds it amusing and he takes pride in it.

It is precisely because I am doing things like this that I have been unable to write replies to the letters I have received from you all.

My apologies.

Even at a hundred, a sparrow never forgets to dance.

Yesterday, believe it or not, I was performing that “Golden Bat” act in the sacred lecture hall of a certain top-tier university, right in front of the students.

That’s right, I’ll go ahead and shamelessly share here the script for the street kamishibai performance I gave at that time.

After performing the “Golden Bat” paper theater, I used this script as a basis to give a lecture on the history of street performance, sounding quite convincing, for about thirty minutes in front of the students and teachers.

Hello, I am the author of the kamishibai “Golden Bat vs. Dr. Death” that I just performed, and I am the one who drew the illustrations.

This “Golden Bat,” a monster with a skull for a face, his entire body completely covered by a red cape, who flies freely through the sky despite having neither wings nor feathers, is said to have first appeared on the kamishibai stage long, long ago, around 1930.

In other words, that was eighty years ago.

Before I tell you the story of Golden Bat, I wanted to talk a little about the history of kamishibai itself, but since that would take too long, I will skip that part for now.

At that time, there was a form of street kamishibai, and it was extremely popular with children.

“Street” is written with the characters for “street” (machi) and “head” (ata), meaning it was kamishibai performed right in the streets.

Performers would load a stage and a box of candy onto the back of a bicycle, moving from street to street to set up shop in places like parks, vacant lots, or alleyways where there were no passersby.

So, if it rained, they couldn’t perform. On rainy days, they took the day off.

It is said that back then, there were over two thousand of these kamishibai performers in Tokyo alone.

There were reportedly more than twenty companies, or rather, workshops, producing these kamishibai in the Tokyo areas.

However, since they were all small-scale operations, they would open and then go out of business, only to be replaced by new ones that would also fail, so no exact figures have been preserved.

It is said that an artist named Takeo Nagamatsu, who belonged to one of these workshops, created “Golden Bat” together with a scriptwriter named Ichiro Suzuki.

This “Golden Bat” became the biggest hit in the history of street kamishibai.

It was enjoyed not only by children but also by adults, and sequels were produced one after another.

Back then, there was no such thing as copyright, or perhaps there was, but since the world of kamishibai involved performing on street corners while selling candy to children, it wasn’t a big deal.

Each panel of this street kamishibai was hand-drawn. They weren’t mass-produced. Even if they had printed identical copies, it wouldn’t have been a viable business.

However, because “Golden Bat” became so popular, similar kamishibai were created all over the place, and those too were welcomed by the children of the town.

It was an era without television, and this was the cheapest and most accessible form of entertainment.

Even now, eighty years later, when older people hear the word “kamishibai,” they say, “Ah, Golden Bat, that was fun,” with a nostalgic smile.

Why did “Golden Bat” become such a beloved character, one that remains in people’s memories to this day?

As you can see, “Golden Bat” is, quite literally, preposterous. You can’t even figure out what he is or who he really is.

Is he human, an alien, or perhaps some kind of ghostly entity? It’s impossible to tell.

Its eerie, skeletal face and head don’t look like they’re wearing a mask.

He's supposed to be a hero, so why does he have such an ominous, terrifying face?
It's a mystery.

No one knows where he lives or where he flies in from.

No one knows what he eats to survive either.

Unlike Superman from America, there is absolutely no plausible explanation of his origins, from his birth to his flight through space and arrival on Earth.

He never says a single word about having come to protect the Earth.

Anyway, whenever the Japanese protagonist is in danger, he suddenly flies in.

Then he shouts, "I'm the hero!" and laughs loudly, defeating the villains. Then he leaves.

We don't know any of the details.

I don't think even the creator who first made this knew. Perhaps they found it too much trouble to come up with a logical explanation.

I believe it was this very lack of anything, this freshness, that captured people's inexplicable interest and led to its popularity.

After all, in the human world, even when we understand the logic, things rarely go according to plan.

Even though we don't really know what's going on, and even though we're not entirely sure if he's truly a hero, Golden Bat, who laughs loudly, declaring himself a hero for the time being, and flies in from somewhere, still hasn't faded from the public's memory. Perhaps that's exactly why.

That's how it is.

I embellished this story and told it in a funny way. Everyone watched and listened intently. It was so much fun!

After "Golden Bat" wrapped up and I was taking a breather, I received a request from a local history museum to stage a "Standing Illustration" performance.

“Standing Illustration” (Tachi-e) is a form of street performance that was popular from a period during the Meiji era through the Taisho and early Showa eras. It’s considered the precursor to kamishibai. I’m the only person left today who can actually perform it.

So I couldn’t refuse. Once I accepted, my already hectic schedule piled up even more, and I found myself completely tied up.

If I miss my time to die and just drag out my life, moping around due to illness or something, it will end up being miserable.

The season for the theater festival held in my neighborhood is also approaching. Since there are personal connections involved, I just can’t turn this one down.

The manuscript for “The Life and Work of Minomira Ko,” which the publisher has commissioned me to write. This is my main profession and a major undertaking. I have to write a total of four volumes.

I also have to write a novel on short notice for another publisher. An eighty-page mystery.

When I count them all up, there are still plenty more.

Oh, right, the play I’m going to see with Rakka-san. I absolutely must go to this, even if it means sacrificing everything else!

2010.5.17

濡木痴夢男のおしゃべり芝居 第百二十七回

Nureki Chimuo's Talking Theater Chapter 127

畜生塚の意味

The Meaning of Chikushozuka

We watched a rare full-length kyogen play, the sort rarely staged these days, from 11:30 AM until nearly 4 PM. Afterward, we walked along the vibrant, fresh-green Uchibori-dori, from Hayabusa-cho to Miyakezaka and from Sakuradamon to Hibiya Park, all the way to Matsumoto-ro inside the park, passionately discussing the play we had just seen.

"I just can't quite wrap my head around it. It doesn't sit right with me. Hey, was that play really supposed to end like that? Is that really how it's supposed to be?" Rakka-san said.

"Hmm..." I replied vaguely. I was grinning to myself.

"I never expected it to end so brightly and cheerfully, with six young festival participants, each holding an umbrella emblazoned with the 'Yamizaki-ya' name, spinning those umbrellas around so flashily, I feel like something's missing. It was such an interesting play up until that point."

Though her exact words were different, she said something to this effect as we walked side by side, her voice tinged with a hint of indignation.

"That's just fine. To leave the audience with a pleasant, joyful aftertaste and send them out of the theater, you need a bright, lively finale like that. Those dashing young festival-goers are actually law enforcement officers, and O-Tomi is destined to be arrested eventually," I said, defending the play from the performers' perspective.

Men and women in shorts kept passing us one after another from behind, then running off.

They were energetic people jogging around the Imperial Palace. We, shut away inside the theater, were of course enjoying ourselves, but surely these people running around in the sunshine were also basking in their own pleasure.

I created a “standing illustration” of the Kawatake Mokuami play I just saw over a decade ago.

(Explaining this “standing illustration” would take too long right now, so I’ll explain it later.)

In the “standing illustration” I created, the puppet of “O-Tomi, the Slain” is captured by officials, placed on a bareback horse while still bound, paraded through the streets, and finally executed on a stake.

(While I’m at it, I should mention that these puppets are currently on loan to the Sex Industry Museum. Any member of the museum can view them.)

Hey, Rakka-san.

After reading the director’s notes for this play by Kawakake Mokuami in the script, you muttered, “This director’s words are strange. They’re condescending, and I just can’t read them with a sense of ease. It leaves a bad taste in my mouth.”

Hearing that, I grunted “hmm” and grinned silently, but as it turned out, I came to realize after the play ended that your muttering was actually correct.

Hey, Rakka-san.

You were truly perceptive to read the director’s text before the curtain rose and intuitively grasp the quality of the production.

Unnervingly sharp.

I have no choice but to say, “I take my hat off to you.”

Regarding this play by Zensho, written during the decadent period of the Bakumatsu era, Toshio Kawakake-san wrote the following in his “Complete Collection of Kabuki Masterpieces”:

As I mentioned at the beginning, the highlights are the brutal torture scenes, the blackmail scenes, and murder scenes. However, unlike “Kirare Yozo,” the unique decadent beauty of stories featuring poisonous women and wicked old women lies in the fact that the women’s allure and sensuality are constantly interwoven throughout.

The scene where O-Tomi is tortured to death at Akama’s concubine’s residence was apparently staged quite graphically at the time. For example, when Anzo hoists the trunk containing O-Tomi’s dismembered body onto his back, “a mechanism causes blood made

from real suou (a type of dye) to seep out of the wicker basket and flow out in a steady stream.”

However, when O-Tomi, having been so grievously wounded, reunited with Yosaburo at the Ichitsuka residence, she hid her face with her sleeve, ashamed to be seen, saying, “Oh, how embarrassing,” and it is said that Tanosuke was unparalleled in his portrayal of this very moment.

Looking up “suou” in the dictionary, one finds “A deciduous shrub of the legume family. Native to India and Malaya. The heartwood is shaved to extract a red dye from its pigment.”

In old rakugo and ballad performances, when a person becomes covered in blood, it is described as “thrashing about with their whole body dyed in suou.”

And so on. I (Nureki) have also used this expression several times in my novels.

There was no scene where blood dripped from the cracks in the trunk as Anzo hoisted it onto his back after stuffing O-Tomi’s dismembered body inside. However, this time there was a dramatic touch. As the blood-soaked O-Tomi writhed in agony, trying to escape, and clawed at the sliding doors with both hands, her handprints remained smeared red on the wood, lending the scene a touch of cruelty.

The scene preceding that, where O-Tomi, bound behind her back with a red sash, is hacked to pieces by several men, seemed to be staged quite effectively.

(After all, she sustains seventy-five stab wounds all over her body. It really is a cruel story.)

A few years ago, when Sojuro Sawamura played “O-Tomi” at the same theater, this scene was not explicitly included.

In this production as well, it wasn’t the kind of brutal, drawn-out torture depicted in the script, but rather a matter of being poked here and there with the tip of a dagger. It didn’t quite reach the level of being “gruesome,” but it certainly had a certain atmosphere to it.

More than anything else, just as in “Kiare Yozo,” O-Tomi and Yozaburo naturally have a physical relationship in this play as well, and it is because of this that the brutal stabbing takes place at Akama’s concubine’s residence. Yet, in reality, these two are brother and sister.

The final scene of this production, “The Scene at Kitsunezaki’s Animal Grave,” symbolizes this incestuous relationship. That is, the “animal realm,” but the audience is not explicitly told this.

Perhaps this is because the performance is taking place at a major national theater.

I suspect that the ambiguity in the director's expression, and the sense of unease Rakka-san felt upon reading the script and scratching her head, stem from this very point. What do you think?

In the near future, I intend to present a version of "Kirare O-Tomi" that is even more decadent and carries a more repulsive aura than these existing adaptations, using the "standing illustrations" I created myself. I have written this passage to serve as a prelude to that endeavor.

P.S.

Rakka-san, who read this "Talking Theater" right away, called me.

I wrote that when O-Tomi's affair with Yozaburo was exposed and she was hacked to pieces, a blood-soaked handprint was left on the sliding door (or perhaps the wall), but Rakka-san suggest that the handprint might not have been O-Tomi's, but rather that of Akama Genzaemon's henchmen.

She argues that O-Tomi had already fainted by then and was not in a state where she could press both hands against the sliding door or wall.

"I wonder if that's right."

I don't have a clear memory of it.

Now that she mentions it, I think that might have been the case.

I remember very well how delicious the Hayashi rice and curry rice were at Matsumoto-ro in Hibiya Park, but I've forgotten the subtle movements of the onnagata on stage.

The reason I know the taste of both Hayashi rice and curry rice is that whenever I go into a restaurant with Rakka-san, we always order two different dishes and share them, eating half of each.

Yes, thank you for the meal.

2010.5.28

濡木痴夢男のおしゃべり芝居 第百二十八回

Nureki Chimuo's Talking Theater Chapter 128

シリーズ・2「人質」台本

Series 2: "Hostage" Script

I'm going to go ahead and publish the screenplay for "The 'Too Cute' Series, Part 2" by Nureki Chimuo right here.

If all goes according to plan, filming based on this script will begin in fifteen days.

Characters Fuyuko

Her older sister, Natsuko

The Bad Guy

Introduction:

Keep the overall lighting dim at all times.

Both the characters' expressions and the overall scene should maintain a hazy, dim tone throughout. That dimness is the theme of this work.

At times, the screen should be so dim as to make the viewer feel irritated.

I wish to reject the conventional and vulgar lighting techniques of professional cameramen.

Even the heroine's expression is dim. There is no need to shoot her in a deliberately beautiful way. I know that this dimness richly stimulates the viewers' imagination. The fact that they cannot see what they want to see arouses their desire.

In keeping with the situation of this drama, let us create footage with a realistic, natural mood using lighting that remains dim throughout.

I know all too well how cliched, artificially bright lighting can turn viewers off.

1. The stairs in an empty building.

Fuyuko, a woman blindfolded with a white cloth, gagged, and bound with her hands tied in front of her with rope, is dragged up the narrow stairs by a man who holds the ends of the rope.

This villainous man is played by Nureki Chimuo. Well, it's pretty much just me playing myself (laughs).

Unable to see or speak, Fuyuko freezes in terror halfway up the stairs and is unable to move.

Man: "What's wrong? Just a little further. Walk."

He pulls on the end of the rope binding Fuyuko.

As her wrists are pulled, Fuyuko shakes her head from side to side in terror. She is trembling violently.

Man: "Just a little further. Get up there. Once we're at the top, I'll at least take off your blindfold."

The man grabs Fuyuko by the hair and forces her up the stairs.

Dragged along, Fuyuko moves her feet little by little. She lets out a moan of terror and pain.

(Note) Since the studio stairs are white and clean, place bundles of old magazines on them to create a cluttered look.

Also, ensure that only the man's hands and feet appear on screen. Avoid showing his face as much as possible.

The audience's focus must remain solely on the captive woman. If the man's face is shown, the audience's interest will be halved.

It would be ideal if the shot creates the illusion that it is not Nureki who is capturing and dragging the woman, but the audience itself.

2. The entrance to the staircase. And inside it.

A man and a woman climb the stairs and finally reach the entrance to the room.

It is a room in an empty building somewhere, a completely empty space.

With her eyes and mouth still covered, the woman looks terrified and anxious. Her wrists are still bound.

Woman: "Uh, uhhhhh, uhh...." she moans.

Man: "I'll at least take off the blindfold."

He removes the white cloth blindfold.

At this moment, he notices that the gag has loosened, so he re-ties it.

He shoves several rolled-up pieces of cloth into the woman's mouth and presses them down tightly.

(Here, the allure of a proper gag is shown in detail and to the fullest.)

Man: "Now that we've come this far, you can't escape. No one knows about this place."

The woman scans the unfamiliar room with eyes filled with anxiety and terror.

Man: "Give up, Fuyuko. You're going to be with me. I'm not asking you to marry me. I just want you to live with me. I want to spend every day looking at your face."

The woman shakes her head. Her eyes are filled with anger and hatred.

Man: "Do you hate me?"

The woman nods.

Man: "Is there no way you can bring yourself to like me?"

The woman, eyes full of anger, nods.

Man: "I see. Well, I guess there's no helping it. Well, look at that."

In the corner where the man points, there is a single, shabby bed.

On the bed, a thin futon is piled up in the shape of a person lying down.

The futon, still bulging, wriggles and shifts.

The woman stares at it with eyes full of anxiety and fear.

The man moves closer to the bed and slowly lifts the futon.

And then...

Beneath the quilt lies a woman, her hands bound behind her back and a gag forced into her mouth, writhing in agony.

This woman is Fuyuko's older sister, Natsuko.

Man: "Look closely."

Fuyuko strains her eyes and stares intently at Natsuko. Because she is gagged, Fuyuko cannot make out her features clearly at first, but eventually she realizes it is her older sister.

Fuyuko: "Mmm, mmm!" crying in shock.

Man: "That's right. It's your sister, Natsuko. I kidnapped her and brought her here yesterday."

Fuyuko: "Mmm, mmm!"

Man: "Your mother died of an illness when you were still small. That older sister of yours took her place and raised you. So she's just like your mother. If you do as I say, I'll spare this woman. What do you say?"

The man sits Natsuko up.

Natsuko cries and pleads with the man.

But because of the gag, she can't make a sound.

The man leans his ear close to Natsuko's mouth.

Man: (Nodding) "What did you say? You want to go to the bathroom? I see. I wouldn't want you peeing yourself right here on this bed, you know."

The man lifts Natsuko off the bed, grabs the end of the rope and drags her toward the bathroom.

The pitiful sight of Natsuko, forced to walk with her hands tied behind her back.

Her poor younger sister, Fuyuko, watches with heartbroken eyes.

3. In front of the bathroom.

The man and Natsuko approach the restroom.

The restroom door is broken (the restroom door at that studio really is broken).

Man: "This restroom door is broken. It'd be embarrassing to pee in a place like this. You know what? Since that's the case, just do it in the room."

The man leads Natsuko back into the room.

He secures the end of the rope high up, fixing Natsuko in a position where she's standing on her tiptoes.

Man: "Do it there. Pee while standing, still tied up. Do it with your panties on. Do it in front of me and your sister."

Natsuko shakes her head, pleading with sorrowful eyes, and moans.

The man grins a cruel smile. Then he says to Fuyuko, "Listen, Fuyuko. If you don't do what I say, your older sister will be punished like this forever."

The man jabs the tip of a thin whip all over Natsuko's body, lewdly urging her to urinate. Natsuko writhes in agony, finally unable to hold it any longer, and loses control while still wearing her panties.

Seeing this, the man brings a bucket and a rag and places them in front of Fuyuko.

Man: "Wipe up the mess your sister made. Clean it up."

Fuyuko, her wrists still bound in front of her, wipes the floor her sister soiled with the rag. What a pitiful, heartbreaking sight.

The man temporarily unties Fuyuko's wrists.

Man: "This time I'll tie your hands behind your back. Put your hands behind your back."

Fuyuko shakes her head from side to side in resistance.

Man: "If you say no, I'll punish your sister again."

Once more, he lewdly jabs a thin whip all over Natsuko's body. Natsuko struggles pitifully.

Seeing this, Fuyuko, writhing in frustration, puts her hands behind her back.

Man: "Raise your wrists higher. Higher, higher, higher!"

With a smug grin, the man slowly ties Fuyuko's hands behind her back with rope. A brutal, harsh binding.

This is the climax, the showstopper, so film it carefully and in detail.

Fuyuko, tightly bound in a takate kote, is made to stand side by side with Natsuko, and the ends of the rope are suspended and secured at a high position.

Then, Natsuko's left leg and Fuyuko's right leg are bound together with rope.

Rope is wrapped around the sisters' upper thighs and ankles, and a thick candle is wedged between them.

(The candle must be white. Do not use red candles, as they look unnatural and give the scene a cheap, adult video vibe.)

Light the candle.

The sisters are terrified.

The man is now more obsessed with tormenting these sisters than with making Fuyuko his own. He is completely absorbed in it.

Soon, molten wax begins to drip, drop by drop, onto the sisters' toes.

The sisters writhe in agony. He films them carefully, with a maniacal intensity.

The room's lighting gradually dims, until eventually, only the eerie flame of the candle burning between the sister's legs remains.

The words "To Be Continued" appear on the screen, and the scene ends.

Concept: Nakahara Rutsu

Direction: Yamanouchi Sachi

Cinematography: KEI, Yamame Fumi

Screenplay: Nureki Chimuo

Cast: Sawato Fuyuki, Kasumi Shion, Nureki Chimuo

That is the story in a nutshell.

Actually, “situation” might be a more accurate term than “story.”

Based on this premise, we develop the bondage or torture elements, adapting and evolving them to suite the atmosphere of the scene.

At some point, the cloth gag naturally loosens. From my experience, it always does.

Every time that happens, we reapply the gag.

Make sure to film that gag-reapplication scene properly.

(It is precisely scenes like this that are stimulating, fetishistic, and interesting.)

I don’t think I need to state this again, but the woman’s lower body will not be exposed. Underwear will be visible.

Of course, vibrators and the like are absolutely not to be used.

The man (Nureki) will always move mysteriously like a shadow in the dim lighting and will not come to the forefront.

If a full-body shot of the man comes to the forefront, it will instantly turn into a vulgar SM video, so take great care.

I’ve tentatively titled it “Hostage,” but I’d like to hear the opinions of both the planner and the director.

P.S.

I faxed this script to director Yamanouchi Sachi and asked him to read it. She replied immediately with the following message.

You can really sense the director’s enthusiasm. Since I have the opportunity, I’d like to share it here.

To Nureki Sensei,

“Hostage”.... I think that’s a good title.

It’s just two kanji characters, clean and cool. If you can effectively convey the emotional shifts of the cornered sisters, I think it will make for a truly excellent work.

I’d like to make it so impressive that people say, “I’ve never seen anything this amazing before.”

I just had a meeting with KEI from the camera team, and we came up with some interesting ideas for lighting, so I’d like to try them out on the day of the shoot.

I have a feeling this will be a piece unlike anything currently available on the market.

KEI also said he wants to get as close as possible to your vision, Nureki-san. I just can’t help but feel sorry for the younger sister wiping up her older sister’s pee. It’s just too miserable. I want to direct this scene well.

It’s also nice that the older sister is squirming around in bed in the opening scene. I’ll have to think carefully about how to shoot this part with the video camera. I’ll give it some thought.

Additional note. (From Nureki to Nakahara Rutsu)

For this shoot as well, I had naively assumed we’d follow the same old routine. A man calling himself a “rope master” would tie up the model in the standard way, torment them, and then untie them when the time was up, a process that could be described as the epitome of monotony. To tell the truth, it’s simply the easiest way to do things.

But you told me, “You’re the only one who can create footage that satisfies the desires of bondage enthusiasts right now. Now is the time to make the intense bondage drama we’ve always talked about. You mustn’t slack off.”

“Now is the time to create a drama,” she repeatedly persuaded and inspired me. It was Nakahara-san’s presence that made me write this script.

As you can see, Yamanouchi Sachi-san is also raring to go. I ask for your active advice on the set as well.

2010.6.1

濡木痴夢男のおしゃべり芝居 第百二十九回

Nureki Chimuo's Talking Theater Chapter 129

白井権八ババア斬り

Shirai Gonpachi, The Old Woman Slayer

At the storytelling club where we meet once a month to practice, I was delivering the opening lines of “Gozonji: Suzugamori” with great enthusiasm, all the while keeping a watchful eye on the tachi-e stage.

As I got more and more into it, listening to my own voice, I found myself becoming entranced, thinking to myself, “What a rich, resonant, and beautiful tone I have.”

“Young man, please wait a moment. The one who told you to wait is none other than myself, isn’t that right?”

Just as I was lost in self-admiration and raised my voice in a particularly fine mood, a thought crossed my mind, one completely unrelated to the “Suzugamori” puppet show, another group I’ve been attending once a week.

“Alright, I’ve made up my mind. I’m cutting ties with you lot. You filthy old hags. I’m never looking at your faces again. Drop dead, you fucking old hags.”

The spirit of Shirai Gonpachi, drawing his sword and mowing down those good-for-nothings one after another, possessed me.

This other group is also a gathering of people who specialize in voice acting.

Most of them are women, and the group goes by some name like “Bariana Furi” or something. Waving the banners of seemingly plausible humanism and justice, these old hags — no, I mustn’t use such a filthy word as “hags.” I’ll bite my tongue and call them “ladies” instead, proudly performing their clumsy storytelling.

These ladies, dressed in fine clothes and with their white faces covered in smooth makeup, were holding a tear-filled gathering overflowing with goodwill, intent on using their storytelling skills to help people with physical disabilities. What a foolish notion! And there I was, completely out of place, having inadvertently stumbled into their midst.

I wrote “utterly out of character,” but it was indeed a case of a man as petty and vulgar as myself, a wretch whose poverty-stricken mentality has seeped deep into his very guts, sticking his nose into a place completely out of his league.

It’s no use regretting it now, but I can only say I must have been possessed by a demon.

“If our humble storytelling skills can be of even the slightest help to those poor souls...”
Pfft.. what the hell is she talking about?

She calls it a “humble” performance, but deep down, she’s convinced it’s actually quite a fine one.

Otherwise, she wouldn’t have the arrogance to think she could entertain others and offer them comfort.

I simply cannot stand the sense of superiority displayed by these ladies, not “old hags” pretending to sympathize with “those poor souls,” but ladies.

What filthy old hags they are.

Still, since I have a connection to this gathering and feel a certain sense of obligation, I quietly took a seat at the end of the row where the ladies were lined up. I made a genuine effort to wholeheartedly go along with their spirit of volunteerism.

As I listened to the ladies’ arrogant and clumsy storytelling for the sake of “those poor souls,” I gradually lost my patience. I’d like to share here the notes I scribbled on the back of the flyer I had on hand.

I tried to understand their “goodwill” even a little, but I finally couldn’t take it anymore, and ended up writing this in such a hysterical manner.

After living eighty years, when I should have long since given up on everything and settled down, I still had enough youth left in me to scribble such an emotional note.

I’m not quite done yet.

To confirm the youthfulness of my own heart, I am taking the trouble to transcribe this scribbled note here.

*Doesn’t this just amount to a denial of the human capacity for imagination?
Narration that’s nothing but explanations like this is just annoying.
It’s annoying, annoying, it just feels like nothing but noise.
This kind of narration is like robbing us of our precious ability to visualize.*

I absolutely cannot believe that something like this would be beneficial to the hearts of people with disabilities.

It's a waste. It just makes me frustrated.

*When there's unnecessary narration I can't get into the drama.
It really does kill the viewer's imagination. I don't trust people who do this kind of work thinking it's "good." I question their judgement.*

*It's a nuisance. Anyway, narration like this is a nuisance. Meaningless.
We have to believe in imagination. Let's continue to believe in and cherish our imagination above all else.*

*I've come to realize just how important moments of silence are in a drama.
"Silence is golden," this is exactly what that means.*

The performance of the voice actors on screen are sufficient. Even when I try to empathize with the drama, the narration blocks it.

It's noisy. It's just noisy. The voice actors' voices alone are enough. The emotion comes through just fine.

When narration comes in incessantly and frantically, it kills the emotion.

Silence, pauses, the joy of imagining. The breadth of the drama.

It is pointless narration that denies and hinders the depth of the drama.

Space left unexplained. The effect of darkness.

Drama is built on effective omissions!

The moments of silence are the most important part of the drama!

There was a fan who said Nureki tinkered too much with his models.

*There was a fan who said that a model's psychology is conveyed by a motionless, silent model.
It's okay to leave the parts you don't understand as they are.*

You don't have to make everything perfectly clear.

Through the soaring music and the murmurs of the voice actors, the drama's content is fully understood. Or perhaps even more so than by able-bodied people. We can grasp things that able-bodied people cannot.

It is precisely when there are things we don't understand that the drama's imagery expands more richly.

These ladies are mocking the imagination abilities of people with disabilities.

This is something that must not be done.

We must not do anything that kills the imagination of the blank spaces!

This is the arrogance of able-bodied people!

The arrogance of able-bodied people reaches its peak here!

While those shameless ladies were smugly competing in their voice acting, I scribbled these words on the back of a flyer.

I had to attend this wretched meeting four more times.

I had to sit through three hours of it each time.

I couldn't stand those three hours.

I hated breathing the same air as those ladies.

I only had to endure four more sessions, twelve hours in total, but I just couldn't take it anymore.

I thought that if I stayed here, I would be ruined. I thought I would cease to be myself.

I am a person of low ambition, vulgar and uneducated, the scum of society.

But even someone like me would be in trouble if I ceased to be myself. I must remain myself and live a little longer.

Even after leaving that meeting room, I felt gloomy. From morning till night, I was in a gloomy mood.

Even when I wasn't in the same room, the shameless arrogance of those ladies weighed heavily on me.

Now, having come to a gathering of storytellers, unrelated to volunteer work, and standing here in front of the small "tachi-e" stage, telling the story of "Suzugamori," my gloomy mood cleared and I felt elated. Even the blood vessels at the tips of my fingers and toes grew hot.

Shouting out with all my might in a Kabuki-style tone really is a good thing.

“All right, I’ll escape from that hideous horde of old women,” I resolved, just as Shirai Gonpachi, having cut down every last one of the swarm of ruffians attacking him: “If the pheasants hadn’t cried out, they wouldn’t have been killed. What a pointless slaughter I’ve committed,” raising his voice even higher.

I won’t go back to that room where those hypocrites hang out. I won’t go back, no way!

Instantly, the dark clouds in my heart were blown away, and my vision cleared.

I felt as though I had cut down those old hags.

“Sensei, it’s been sixteen years since I last moved the puppets to your narration, it was so much fun. I was thrilled. Please let me do it during the actual performance, too!”

M-ko, who had been operating the puppets in time with my narration, looked up at me with a flushed face.

“I’d be honored to have you.” I bowed my head to her.

The actual performance of this “standing illustration (tachi-e)” is two months from now. I wonder how many more times we’ll have to rehearse.

I wrote the script for “Gozonji: Suzugamori,” I crafted over twenty puppets, and I will be the one performing the narration.

Nureki Chimuo, who loves theater (clapping), is also involved in this sort of thing.

2010.6.2

濡木痴夢男のおしゃべり芝居 第百三十回

Nureki Chimuo's Talking Theater Chapter 130

「人質」撮影八日前

Eight Days Before Filming “Hostage”

The script for the video “Hostage” I wrote the other day has been well received, and I was especially grateful to hear “it’s interesting” from Yamanouchi Sachi-san, who is handling the overall production and direction, and from Nakahara Rutsu-san, who originally conceived the project.

As I mentioned briefly before, my plan for this shoot was the same as always. I, the “bondage specialist” accustomed to tying up women, would tie up a model who is used to being tied up, perform some sort of “torment” and untie her, and that would be it.

However, even someone as dim-witted as me knows that such footage has long since become formulaic, facile, and something everyone is thoroughly fed up with.

I know that, but for the performer, shooting footage like this, where everything is so familiar and predictable, is actually the easiest.

But then, “No one’s going to watch footage made the easy way these days. We can’t be lazy. Didn’t the first installment of the ‘Too Cute to Handle’ series get such great reviews? Let’s do that second one. Let’s all work hard together and create another interesting bondage piece.”

It was Nakahara-san who encouraged me with those words.

Even as I continued to hesitate, Nakahara-san urged and encouraged me again and again.

I agreed, and wrote “Hostage.”

Furthermore, both Yamanouchi-san and Nakahara-san expressed a level of “motivation” for cooperating on the filming of “Hostage” that exceeded my expectations.

The vision I had outlined in the script was immediately conveyed to both of them.

I gained great confidence and courage.

I'm a natural show-off by nature (after all, I was born and raised in Asakusa), so no matter how enthusiastic I am, if the people around me don't react much and remain calm, I immediately lose my "drive."

(Yamanouchi-san and Nakahara-san, who were right there watching my behavior when I recently defected from that "Bariana-Furi-Something-or-Other" group and accepted the commission for the "Standing Illustration: Gozonji Suzugamori" from the History Museum, surely understand my true nature as a show-off all too well. Ah, how embarrassing!)

If someone shares my feelings, shows passion in the same direction as me, and vows to cooperate, I instantly burst into flames, burning with a fierce, rousing passion. That is my nature.

I was deeply moved that Nakahara-san immediately used a computer to neatly print and beautifully bind my handwritten script.

She produced enough copies to go to every single staff member and performer in the blink of an eye.

It is a truly beautiful and splendid script, printed and bound with care to be easy to use on set.

I immediately mailed those scripts to Sawato Fuyuki and Kasumi Shion.

Both are trusted friends I've known for a long time.

"Seeing" them, in other words, means "binding" them.

Both are women who show "genuine reactions" that cannot be seen in conventional "bondage videos."

These are not reactions meant for others to see, but intense, unfeigned reactions coming from the depths of their hearts and the very core of their bodies.

I'll say it again, Shion and Fuyuki, "reactions meant for others to see" are unnecessary. I absolutely do not want you to give "reactions meant for others to see" during this shoot.

However, this request of mine is in essence futile.

Anyone seeing these two women's reactions to being bound by me for the first time will undoubtedly be stunned by their authenticity.

I can already picture the reactions of these two women eight days from now.

But on the day of the shoot, with a particularly solemn heart, I will say this to them: “Let’s give it our all, not for anyone else to see, but for ourselves. For ourselves, I’ll do it too. For myself.”

Ah, I can already see the sparkle in their eyes at that moment.

I will cast aside the Nureki Chimuo I used to be and become a bad man who “loves her so much it makes him hate her a hundred times more.”

I will cast aside the “bondage specialist” who proudly manipulates ropes with deft hands and become a “vicious, obsessive man.”

In the beautiful script Nakahara Rutsu-san wrote for me, I’ve already made plenty of notes to transform myself into that “bad man.”

I’ve written things in the script like, “Instead of clear dialogue meant to be heard by third parties, stick strictly to the way a man with ‘a hundredfold hatred born of excessive affection’ speaks, darkly, gloomily, muttering, fidgeting, and mumbling.”

It was actually Nakahara Rutsu who proposed turning this series into the “Too Cute to Handle” series.

“Too cute to handle, a hundred times more hateful.”

Surprisingly, it is precisely in this short phrase that lies the unshakable essence of bondage drama, or so-called SM drama.

A facet of the truth behind bondage acts is encapsulated here with exquisite nuance.

We must make the sentiment of “too much cuteness” the core of the drama.

Huh?

You’re asking where exactly that meaning lies in this phrase?

I hope you’ll understand without my having to explain it.

Those who don’t understand, well, they’re the ones who aren’t qualified to watch this “Hostage” footage.

They’re the ones who’ll just find it boring, even if they do watch it.

2010.6.5

濡木痴夢男のおしゃべり芝居 第百三十一回

Nureki Chimuo's Talking Theater Chapter 131

「人質」撮影五日前

Five Days Before the Filming of “Hostage”

At the invitation of Yamanouchi Sachi-san, the executive producer and director of the bondage drama “Hostage,” the production staff gathered at the Sanwa Publishing studio.

With filming set to begin in five days, this meeting was held to review the theme of the production.

The cameraman, Ryu, was there too.

The moment I saw Ryu's face, I couldn't help but exclaim in a cheerful voice, “Oh, you came!”

Ryu-kan was the cameraman for Series 1's “Married Woman Confinement Bar.” The positive reception of that video was largely due to his filming sensibility.

Actually, due to the scheduling conflicts, it had been uncertain whether he would be able to participate in this shoot.

“Are you going to do it?”

The moment I saw his face, I asked him straight away.

“Yes,” he replied, flashing a smile.

“Weren't you supposed to be busy?”

“Well, yeah. But I'll do it. I want to do it.” Confirming Ryu-kun's willingness to participate, I felt a great sense of relief.

The success or failure of a drama depends largely on the skill of the cameraman.

The reason I can trust Ryu-kun's camera work is that I know he's someone who breathes the air of the same "world" as we do.

So, feeling happy, I ended up talking almost exclusively to Ryu-kun from then on.

More than the technical skill of operating the camera, the fact that he shares our body temperature and can breathe in our "world," this is the crucial point that, from my perspective, I cannot compromise on.

No matter how many state of the art devices and tools a photographer may possess, or how much they may boast of their advanced technical skills, if they cannot fundamentally understand our delicate "world," they are, to me, of no use.

Let me say this again.

I know SM. I do a lot of SM work. So while I take pride in calling myself an SM photographer, the truth is, there are quite a few people who cannot truly understand our hearts.

Even if I work with such photographers on bondage photography projects, the result is ultimately just a superficial form. They cannot capture the passion of the heart lurking deep within.

No matter how much you know about SM in name only, you can't possibly take photos that move, excite, and arouse enthusiasts.

Compared to those photographers who call themselves veterans, I know people who, though less experienced, take photos and videos that truly stir the hearts of enthusiasts.

In that sense, Ryu-kun is a young man I can trust. He has thoroughly mastered the basic knowledge and skills. Above all, he filmed "Married Woman Confinement Bar" exactly as I intended. And he edited that footage skillfully (editing is a task that requires tremendous effort and artistic sensibility).

Incidentally, it was Yamanouchi Sachi-san who edited that tape down even further when it was released.

"I think one reason the first film was well-received was that suffocating, closed-room atmosphere. The opening scene where she's dragged up those narrow, steep stairs was really effective. Since it was such a small bar, the kind that's packed just with five or six people sitting down, that's what created that realistic sense of tension," Ryu-kun said.

"The owner asked us to film it in a way that didn't reveal the narrow, old-fashioned Ginza bar was actually xxxx, so the set became even more cramped and confined. That's what created that suffocating sense of pressure. That oppressive atmosphere was definitely a plus.

Nowadays, we shoot mostly in apartment studios that are clean, spacious, and look pristine at first glance, so it's hard to capture that kind of intense, cramped feeling where you feel like your noses are about to bump into each other," I said.

"Compared to that bar, this studio has high ceilings and is spacious, so you can tell just how big the room is from the way sounds and voices echo. We have to be careful about that," I was impressed by Ryu's words. He's so dependable.

You can tell the size of the space just from the voices and sounds.

That's certainly true.

In a cramped, enclosed space, we have to create footage that's as subtle and sensual as possible.

"Yeah, that's why my script specifies that the villain, who's kidnapped and imprisoned two women, must always speak in a low, dark, heavy voice, muttering under his breath. He has to speak lewdly, whispering his resentment into the women's ears in a cloying, persistent manner."

Yamanouchi-san pulled my script toward him, unfolded it, and muttered, "Ah, you're right. There are tons of notes written all over it."

"If my voice accidentally gets too loud, don't worry about it, just kick me in the ass from behind," I told Director Yamanouchi. As long as it's from outside the frame, I don't care what you do.

"Wait, is it really okay to do something like that?" the female director asked, sounding delighted.

"The film we're trying to make is basically a 'secret affair,' so we have to make the audience feel the damp breath and body odor of the people doing something they shouldn't be doing, hidden from the world in a cramped, closed room. We want to let that eerie, decadent scent waft through the whole thing, don't we?"

Ryu-kun's words made my heart race even more and filled me with joy.

"That's right, that's right, Ryu-kun. Ah, you say such wonderful things!"

With those words from the young cameraman, I felt confident that the filming of this "Hostage" was practically a success already.

"Since we're kidnapping two women and the scenes are all about tormenting them in a slow, lewd way, I'm not going to do any suspension shots. I don't think kidnappers have the kind

of playful spirit to go out of their way to suspend women in the air. They don't have the time for that, either. What do you think of those typical suspension shots, Ryu-kun?"

"They're... a circus," Ryu-kun said bluntly.

He meant that suspension isn't SM. It's a circus, nothing more than a sideshow.

I was satisfied with those words as well.

That said, I started doing suspension shows forty years ago, and I've probably done them over three thousand times in magazines and video footage.

Suspension acts are, indeed, visually flashy.

When I perform a suspension act at the climax, it somehow feels like the whole production comes together. It also uses a lot of ropes.

While there is a bit of self-satisfaction involved, I always have this feeling deep down that it's just not SM.

I perform the suspension act because I want to surprise the audience at this point.

But now, no matter how high I suspend, people aren't all that surprised anymore. It's no longer a rarity. You could say it's the epitome of routine.

To be honest, when I perform the aerial suspension, I somehow start to feel rather pathetic.

Is this what SM is? Is this all I can do?

Partly to shake off those feelings, I appear in "Hostage" and play the bad guy.

Apparently, three white men from the U.S. were planning to come and observe the "Hostage" set on the day of filming, but Director Yamanouchi turned them down.

The producer and director feared that having onlookers on set would even slightly disrupt the concentration of the staff and cast.

Of course, I agree with the decision to turn them down. I'm all for it.

It's obvious that having three foreign onlookers breathing in such a confined space would distract Shion and Fuyuki.

To put it bluntly, onlookers who have nothing to do with the filming of “Hostage” are simply a nuisance.

The day before filming, Director Yamanouchi was scheduled to travel to Morioka City for another job. He’s a busy man.

Morioka, the Tohoku Shinkansen, it’s a long way.

I hope he returns safely.

I hope he returns with his energy and stamina just as strong as they are now, no, even stronger than before.

2010.6.7

濡木痴夢男のおしゃべり芝居 第百三十二回

Nureki Chimuo's Talking Theater Chapter 132

「人質」撮影三日前

Three Days Before Filming “Hostage”

As I prepare for the upcoming shoot of “Hostage” before I even start thinking about lighting or the cameraman (though those are certainly important too), there’s something more fundamental, my own issue, that I need to think about more deeply.

That is the issue of shibari.

When I think about it, since the show is billed as a bondage drama, it stands to reason that I must focus my attention most intently on the bondage and exercise the utmost care.

I had carelessly neglected to do so.

No, it’s not that I had neglected it.

Since it’s my own responsibility, I thought I could just think it through on set and adjust the ropes on the fly in response to my partner’s movements.

(Reacting on the spot is my speciality.)

This time, I’ll be tying up two women.

Depending on their reactions, my movements with the ropes will change. The dialogue will likely change as well.

I thought I could just go with my own instincts.

That had been my approach on set for the past five thousand and some shoots.

But now, I felt it was better to think this through properly at least once and engrave it in my mind.

The bondage specialist holding the rope stands behind the female model. Then, as if to say, "I've been waiting for this," the model puts her hands behind her back on her own, striking a pose that says, "Okay, go ahead, tie me up."

There's absolutely no sense of tension.

I vowed to myself once again that in "Hostage," I would absolutely avoid staging such a loose, casual scene that feels like a friendly game of "pretend bondage."

Tying up a model who's easy to tie up doesn't make it SM.

The appeal and true thrill of SM lie in managing to tie up a woman who is difficult to tie.

It's obvious.

Yet, this obvious fact is almost entirely ignored in today's videos. They are nothing but unstimulating "pretend bondage" scenes.

The reason I keep harping on this point is that it is the most crucial aspect of "Hostage."

Even in "Married Woman Confinement Bar" from the "Too Cute to Handle" Series 1, I am certain I didn't use the kind of restraints that would immediately give away such a lack of authenticity.

If a woman who has been kidnapped and confined were to voluntarily put her hands behind her back, wouldn't the drama's realism and appeal vanish instantly?

We've seen more than enough footage of models voluntarily putting their hands behind their backs while a man ties their wrists with a pretentious air.

There have been far too many videos that look like "how-to" tutorials on tying people up. Who on earth would buy that these days?

(I write this repeatedly as a reminder to myself. I haven't counted exactly, but I alone have appeared in over a thousand videos of that kind.)

I have a request for Shion and Fuyuki, the two actors appearing in "Hostage."

For this shoot, I absolutely want you to refrain from putting your hands behind your back on your own.

If you show even the slightest hint of doing so, I will grab your wrists even harder and more roughly, and forcefully twist them behind your back with all my strength to stop you.

At that moment, the woman captured by the “bad guy” I’m playing must feel fear and resist.

She must look for an opening and try to escape.

However, I don’t want them to take that resistance of those escape attempts too seriously.

This is the tricky part.

If you resist for real, there’s no way I’ll be able to tie you up.

(Maybe I should write “laughter” here?)

It’s been twenty years now, but I once conducted an experiment using Hiromi Saotome as a model.

I was surprised.

I just couldn’t tie her up, and I ended up panting and losing my nerve.

A woman’s strength when she resists is far greater than a man could ever imagine. At that moment, I took it to heart.

I seem to recall writing about this somewhere recently as well.

If a woman puts her all into it, a man simply can’t compete.

That’s why I want you to keep your resistance strictly “acted,” Shion-san and Fuyuki-san.

As for me, I’ll tie you up quite forcefully and roughly.

(I can’t be bothered with such wimpy concerns as whether the tying is beautiful or messy.)

While tying you up, I’ll probably say something that sounds the part.

For example, “If you’d just behaved yourself and listened to what I said, you wouldn’t have to go through this pain.” Or something like that.

At that moment, you two must genuinely hurl words of disgust and rejection at this bad man.

(That said, since there are a lot of scenes with you tied up, you probably won't be able to actually speak.)

If you stay silent and look like you're ecstatically savoring the taste of the rope, I'll tighten the ropes even more until you let out a genuine groan.

If you look like you're enjoying it, I'll make you scream for real with a binding that's two or three times as tight as the ones in the "Binding Techniques Workshop," one that cuts into your skin right to the limit.

This time, I'm not just the usual bondage specialist, I'm the bad guy who's kidnapped and imprisoned two women. I won't show you any mercy.

2010.6.8

濡木痴夢男のおしゃべり芝居 第百三十三回

Nureki Chimuo's Talking Theater Chapter 133

「人質」撮影二日前

Two Days Before Filming “Hostage”

One of the staff members who had read the previous post, “Three Days Before Filming ‘Hostage,’” called me right away.

“I could really feel your (Nureki's) passion for this upcoming shoot, and it gave me so much courage, it made me eager to do my very best to help out.

By the way, I told him that there are some scenes on set where I'd like him to really pour his heart into them.”

“Oh, really? What is that? Please don't hold back. If it's something I can do, I'll do anything,” I replied.

There's a part in the script where the “bad guy” temporarily unties Fuyuko's ropes and then ties her up again. I'll transcribe that scene here.

Man: “This time I'm going to tie your hands behind your back. Put your hands behind your back.”

Fuyuko shakes her head from side to side in resistance.

Man: “If you say no, I'll punish your sister again.”

Once more, he lewdly jabs a thin whip all over Natsuko's body. Natsuko writhes pitifully. Seeing this, Fuyuko, writhing in frustration, puts both hands behind her back.

Man: “Raise your wrists higher. Higher, higher, higher!”

With a smug grin, the man slowly binds Fuyuko's hands with rope. A brutal, harsh takate kote binding.

This is the climax, the showstopper, so film it carefully, with passion, and in close detail.

Fuyuki-san, who plays the heroine in this drama, is very flexible, with a slender neck and arms, so the cuffs sit high on her wrists and fit tightly.

For fans of the takate kote, it looks so charming and perfectly formed that it's simply irresistible.

By perfectly formed, I mean it's visually stimulating.

And if it's stimulating to watch, that means it's instantly erotic.

That's why I made this scene one of the climaxes.

"I'm a top director of SM videos. I've shot two hundred of them so far."

I was once hired as a bondage specialist by a director who boasted this.

But no matter what I did, that director just couldn't understand that takate kote bondage is sexy.

He kept ordering me to tie her in a spread-eagle position with her legs spread wide to the left and right. He ordered it over and over again.

No matter how wide a naked woman spreads her legs, there's no way we'd get excited.

A thick vibrator is held in place with a string and inserted, secured so it won't slip out.

Since I'm quite dexterous with my fingers, I'd just say "yes sir" and breeze through even that director's orders with ease.

"What's so sexy about tying her wrists high behind her back? Sexy means spreading her legs wide like this and ramming a thick vibrator right in," the director says, with a smug look on his face.

I have no choice but to give in.

With this kind of mindset, there's no way he could understand the subtleties of sensuality.

Well, putting that aside, the staff member on the other end of the line kept saying, "Please film Fuyuki-san's takate kote scene slowly and persistently. I think it's extremely rare for the act of bringing one's own hands behind one's back to be filmed not as a bondage play scene, but as a bondage drama scene where psyches clash. I want to preserve this as valuable archival footage."

He already knew from watching that Fuyuki-san's takate kote bondage was exceptionally beautiful and erotic.

"Yeah, I'll do it. I'll take my time, doing it slowly, persistently, and thoroughly," I said.

Frankly, I'm happy to hear these encouraging words from the staff. I'm overjoyed.

I'll think through the procedure for re-tying Fuyuko, played by Fuyuki-san, with the takate kote knots in a bit more detail, and while I'm at it, I'll write down Fuyuko's inner thoughts as well.

The man grabs Fuyuko's slender wrists and twists them roughly behind her back.

Then, as if squeezing her wrists, he pulls them forcefully upward to a high position.

Of course, Fuyuko resists.

"Be quiet. Now that it's come to this, you'd better give up. If you don't let me tie you up without a fight, your sister's going to suffer."

Fuyuko instinctively looks toward Natsuko.

Before her eyes, the pitiful figure of Natsuko, struggling.

"Now, raise your wrists higher. Keep them up there and stay still."

Fuyuko, frustrated.

With eyes filled with hatred, she turns to face the despicable man.

"What's the matter? Can't you do as I say? Come on, raise your wrists higher!"

The man sneers, and Fuyuko grimaces in frustration.

A poignant, fleeting struggle between her anger toward the man and her concern for her sister.

Fuyuko finally gave up, hung her head, and raised her wrists behind her of her own accord.

"Higher! Raise them higher!"

The man's cruel voice, tinged with triumph.

“Heh heh heh... That’s it, that’s good. Now, say, ‘Please tie me up.’ Say it!”

Fuyuko tries to speak, but the gag prevents her from forming words. The man slowly ties the ropes around her... Fuyuko’s desperate figure...

I’m happy to receive orders like this from staff that really hit the mark. It shows they’re motivated.

Requests can be as detailed as you like.

It’s the greatest thing for me.

It makes me even more motivated, and my blood boils with courage. I get excited.

When my blood boils, that heat transfers to the ropes as well.

I know I’m complaining again, but I’ve had many experiences in the past where I’ve filmed SM videos on sets where not a single staff member understood SM.

Even if they dislike SM, people will still gather on those sets as long as there’s money to be made.

I work my hardest alongside those people. But it wears me out, both mentally and physically.

There are times when everyone around me feels like an “enemy” and it’s heartbreaking and sad. It only amplifies my sense of loneliness.

At times like that, I disappear from the set the moment filming ends.

Ah, compared to such hollow sets, how reassuring and joyful the upcoming shoot in two days, surrounded by “comrades,” will be.

If I don’t give it my all, I’ll surely be punished.

(That’s right. I should check the rope one more time.)

Two days later, no matter how enthusiastic I am or how foolish I act, not a single person will mock me.

I also received a letter via fax from Fuyuki-san.

As always, it was written in her elegant, beautiful handwriting.

“I am truly delighted to have the opportunity to contribute to a work for which Nureki Sensei wrote the script. (omitted) As you have said, rather than aiming for a work that will astonish everyone, I would like to do my utmost to cooperate so that, above all else, we can enjoy ourselves ‘for our own sake’ and share that joy. I look forward to working with you on the day of the shoot.

Sawato Fuyuki”

After reading my previous post, “Three Days Before Filming ‘Hostage,’” a staff member called me right away, and I thanked them from the bottom of my heart.

“Thank you, it really gave me a boost.”

By the way, that staff member was Nakahara Rutsu, the producer of this drama, “Hostage.”

2010.6.9

濡木痴夢男のおしゃべり芝居 第百三十四回

Nureki Chimuo's Talking Theater Chapter 134

「人質」撮影前日

The Day Before Filming “Hostage”

I received a letter by express mail from Kasumi Kotobuki in Okinawa.

Mr. Kotobuki is the husband of Shion, who appears in “Hostage.”

About a month and a half ago, he called me and said he wanted to come along when Shion was filming her next scene, but I heard he has fallen ill and is currently hospitalized.

It is truly unfortunate.

I had hoped that if her husband could come, he would assist us as a key member of the staff.

Below is the letter from Mr. Kotobuki.

I thoroughly enjoyed reading the “Talking Theater” written eight days, five days, and three days before the filming of “Hostage.”

The passion that you and the entire staff have for this drama really comes through.

I was quite blown away by the final script created by Nakahara Rutsu that you sent me.

After all, we’ve never once had a script when appearing in SM videos.

The first time Shion was tied up by you was in May 2004. I believe it was during a shoot for Core Magazine.

She will surely react with the same freshness she did back then.

As her husband, I can’t wait to see the finished footage. No, actually, I want to see her right now, while she’s still being filmed...

It's a shame.

This express letter from your husband, Mr. Kotobuki, reminded me of something.

Oh, I see. Has it really been six years since then?

It was in the basement of Tanaka Studio (which no longer exists) in Shinjuku's Nukebenten district that I first tied up Shion.

Mr. Kotobuki was there with me at the time.

"She's been longing to be tied up by Nureki Sensei for a long time now," Mr. Kotobuki told me with a gentle, beaming smile.

I can't forget the powerful impression that shoot left on me.

The moment I applied the ropes, Shion fell into a state of ecstasy and nearly lost consciousness.

When someone's passion for rope is this strong, it fills me with a sense of profound gratitude.

That is precisely why the intense sensation of masochism she feels when the ropes touch her skin is so profound.

Just by tying her up and leaving her lying there, she radiates a powerful eroticism of masochism from her petite body.

As a bondage specialist, it is rare to find a woman who is this rewarding to tie up.

However....

This "Hostage" is a drama.

Shion has been kidnapped and bound before her younger sister, Fuyuko, for the sake of the "bad guy" I'm playing.

Essentially, Shion is playing the hostage in the drama "Hostage."

That's why.

That's exactly why.

She must not look happy even when I'm tying her up. Absolutely not.

Do you understand?

You must not get carried away. You must not lose yourself in ecstasy.

From start to finish, you must hate the kidnapper, glare at him with eyes blazing with rage, feel sorrow at the pitiful sight of your sister, shed tears at times, and be constantly on the lookout for a chance to escape.

The gaze you direct at me must always be brimming with contempt, fear, hatred, and anger.

The angry look you give your husband when he seems about to cheat on you.

That's the one. That's powerful. That's terrifying.

Please do that.

I beg you, comrade. Shion-san.

Well, I think I'll turn in early tonight, too.

Before I go to bed, I'll check the ropes one more time.

2010.6.12

濡木痴夢男のおしゃべり芝居 第百三十五回

Nureki Chimuo's Talking Theater Chapter 135

喧嘩屋五郎兵衛

Gorobei the Brawler

This theater company's performances do not have a program.

The performances change every day.

When there are two performances a day, the matinee and evening programs are different. In other words, they perform completely different plays in the afternoon and evening.

That is likely why they do not produce a cast list or anything resembling a program.

Or perhaps it is not so much that they choose not to produce one, but that they simply cannot.

They don't clearly tell the audience what play they'll be performing next.

Even as the start time (which is strictly adhered to) approaches, the audience has no idea what play is about to be performed because there is no program.

Just moments before the clappers sound to signal the opening, the title of the play is finally announced to the audience.

Not knowing what will unfold on stage until the very last moment is thrilling.

Since they don't reveal the title until the very last moment, naturally the audience has absolutely no idea what the play is about. It's impossible to imagine.

It's a strange custom, to say the least.

But perhaps I'm the only one who finds it strange. The packed auditorium is filled with nothing but fervent, pure anticipation. The audience trusts this troupe completely.

But I don't trust them quite that much. I don't trust them, but I do have a sense of anticipation.

That day was no exception.

Clappers rang out from behind the curtain, and suddenly it was announced "And now, the curtain rises on [Gorobei the Brawler](#)."

Hearing that, I couldn't help but whisper into the ear of the woman sitting next to me, "Oh, Gorobei the Brawler. This is a good one. It's a story about a chivalrous outlaw from Osaka. A play full of lighthearted comedy. I'm sure it'll be a lot of fun."

(Since "Gorobei the Brawler" is a period piece, strictly speaking, it should be written as 'Osaka⁹,' but since the characters are 'Osaka people,' I'll use 'Osaka' consistently throughout.)

When the curtain rose, two men dressed as yakuza appeared and explained, in a Kansai accent, that this was Sumiyoshi Taisha Shrine in Osaka.

"See, it's a story set in Osaka, isn't it? Just as I thought, it's about a chivalrous hero from Osaka. This is lighthearted and entertaining," I whispered to her again, filled with anticipation.

Troupes like this are all incredibly skilled when it comes to comedy.

However, I had actually never seen this play, "Gorobei the Brawler," before.

I had never heard it in a rakugo or rokkoku performance. I had never read it in a novel or play.

Of course, I don't recall ever writing it myself either.

How could I have known this story of an Osaka chivalrous hero when I had never seen it, heard it, or read it?

The moment the program was announced, I felt a surge of pride and said, my voice full of excitement, I said to her, "It's an Osaka story, just as I thought. Sumiyoshi Taisha, yeah, this is going to be good. It's going to make us laugh."

But...

This play is neither lighthearted nor cheerful. Far from making us laugh, it unfolds with the appearance of an utterly dark, twisted, and hopeless tragedy.

⁹ This internal thought is for the Japanese reader. In modern times Osaka is written as 大阪, but it used to be 大坂.

Gorobei the Brawler in my imagination was a cheerful and open-hearted town ruffian, portrayed by the portly Ichikawa Utaemon during the heyday of Toei period dramas.

(Incidentally, “open-hearted” refers to someone who is broad-minded and doesn’t get hung up on trivial matters.)

Ichikawa Utaemon never lost his Kansai accent and spoke in a peculiar Edo dialect. Yet he possessed an incredibly cheerful personality.

There is a spectacular scene where Utaemon, playing this dashing town ruffian boss, gallantly rescues a beautiful town girl who is being harassed by a drunken, thuggish samurai and is running for her life.

That was my image of Gorobei the Brawler.

However, while I do remember those scenes of Utaemon’s town ruffian being incredibly strong and cool, I don’t have the confidence to say with certainty that the character was Gorobei the Brawler.

That is the only image I have of Gorobei.

And yet, why did I say things like “This play is interesting” or “It’ll make you laugh” the moment the curtain went up?

I don’t know.

(Well, I guess that just means I’m a scatterbrained klutz after all.)

The stage before me now is set outside the torii gate of Sumiyoshi Shrine in Osaka.

Gorobei, who has just appeared, is a man with a distinctly dark aura, and, surprisingly, a clear bruise around his right eye.

Apparently, this blue mark isn’t actually a birthmark. It’s the scar left by a burn that Gorobei’s older brother accidentally inflicted on him when they were children.

The older brother feels deeply ashamed of his younger brother because of this.

The drama begins with such a gloomy premise.

“Wait a minute, this doesn’t look right.” I think to myself as I watch.

There aren’t any cheerful or lively scenes at all.

And the story kept unfolding in a direction completely opposite to what I had expected.

A dashing traveling samurai named Inosuke (also, naturally, dressed as a vagabond) has laid down his straw sandals at the home of this family of outlaws (I assume, there's no explanation, so I'm not sure) who go by the nickname (or reputation) of "The Brawlers."

It was this Inosuke who rescued a young woman named Oito from danger when she was being harassed by thugs on the grounds of Sumiyoshi Shrine.

However, Oito mistakes Inosuke for the brawler Gorobei and falls in love with him.

The fact that the man Oito hastily fell in love with was Inosuke, not Gorobei, forms the central plot of this play.

Oito is a beautiful young lady from a wealthy merchant family.

Thanks to the efforts of a man named Gen-san, a greengrocer who (apparently) frequents the shop (the nature of this character is unclear, but he is excessively meddling and runs around constantly), the wedding arrangements between Gorobei and Oito are finalized.

After the betrothal ceremony is over and they are about to hold a preliminary wedding celebration, it is revealed that the young woman had actually fallen in love with Inosuke, not Gorobei.

(This is also a strange story. Even though the plot had progressed this far, no one realized it was a case of mistaken identity. It's unnatural.)

Upon learning this fact just before the provisional wedding, Gorobei flies into a rage and is overcome with grief.

It's pathetic for a rogue who prides himself on a swashbuckling nickname like "Brawler." He's acting like a woman.

He's a whiny, indecisive ronin.

If this were Gorobei the Brawler played by Utaemon in a Toei film, he'd first laugh loudly, "Wah, ho, ho-ho-ho!"

And then cheerfully say, "Is that so? Well, I never thought a guy like me could make a young lady like that fall for me. Wah, ho-ho-ho. I get it, I get it. All right, I'll be the matchmaker and make sure Oito and Inosuke end up married. Just leave everything to me, wah-ho-ho-ho."

He'd be shaking his belly in a bold, carefree manner and giving his chest a hearty slap.

However, Gorobei in this play doesn't do that.

Driven by anger, he pours sake into a large cup, and upon seeing the birthmark on his own face reflected in the liquid, he laments and grieves dramatically.

As if this were his big moment, he raises his voice and puts on a passionate, over-the-top performance.

Whether he lacks conviction or comes across as overly effeminate, the audience is swept up by the actor's powerful, impassioned performance and erupts into thunderous applause.

Eventually, Gorobei and Inosuke finally draw their swords and engage in a life or death duel.

I watch in utter bewilderment, wondering what kind of foolish killing spree this is.

Since there is absolutely no psychological portrayal of Inosuke, I simply cannot understand why they are fighting.

Whether they understand it or not, the audience is completely captivated by the actors' passionate performance and is utterly entranced.

"I see. So this is another way to watch a play," I think, finding myself strangely convinced.

There is a twist in the final scene of this play. The older brother, who is acting as a witness to the duel, secretly rubs a stone against the blade of his younger brother Gorobei's sword to dull it.

Gorobei strikes at Inosuke, but because the blade has been dulled, it fails to cut through.

Realizing this, Gorobei thrusts his sword into his own stomach, committing seppuku, and dies.

This is the climactic finale of the play.

The protagonist dies, and naturally, the drama ends here, but I have absolutely no idea what's going on.

I don't understand why the older brother blunted his younger brother's sword.

I don't understand the mindset of a man who raises that battered sword to fight, only to end up committing seppuku.

The feelings of Inosuke, his opponent in the duel, are also a mystery.

I even wondered if it was some kind of surrealist theater (and I don't mean that sarcastically).

When the curtain fell, the audience, as expected, gave a thunderous round of applause. There were even some women in the crowd shedding tears.

(I wondered if the woman sitting next to me understood it, but I no longer had the energy to ask her. I could only sit there in a daze.)

The actors performed with such intense passion, and there was certainly a certain charm to that intensity, that I couldn't take my eyes off the stage. But, I could only shake my head and mutter to myself, "This isn't right. I don't think Gorobei the Brawler was this kind of person..."

That night, I returned home and looked it up.

The "Encyclopedia of Rakugo Works" by Hideaki Yoshizawa, a book I had received from Hideaki Yoshizawa-san himself.

It's a magnificent book, packed with content. Volumes 1, 2, and 3.

I bowed respectfully and opened Volume 1.

Gorobei the Brawler.

There it was. I found it.

From the Genna era through the middle of the Kan'ei era, men known as "otokodate" (chivalrous ruffians) appeared in the streets of Edo and Osaka. In Edo they were called "otokodate," and in Osaka "dateshu." In Edo, notable figures such as Hatsui-in Chobei, Karainu Gonbei, and Yume no Ichirobei emerged.

In Osaka, too, there were renowned "dateshu" such as Kenkaya Gorobei, Uchoten no Kurobei, Hoshira Inosuke, and Asahina Tohei (omitted). Those who rose above the ranks of the "dateshu" in Osaka to earn the title of "kenkaya" and make a name for themselves were truly formidable men.

Gorobei the Brawler, along with his father before him, made a name for themselves as Osaka's foremost masters of the streets, and this too was thanks to Araki Mataemon. (omitted below)

(Note by Nureki: Since there is a separate entry titled "Gorokichi the Quarrelsome" related to this, I will transcribe it here.)

"Gorokichi the Quarrelsome"

(Omitted) Now, when Araki Mataemon was running a dojo in Osaka, many ruffians (known as "dateshi" in Edo, or "town ruffians") enrolled as students. One of them was Mori Goroemon, a ronin formerly in the service of Kato Shikibu-no-Suke, who went by the nickname "Kenkaya" (the "Fighting House"). He was unmatched in skill, and Araki entrusted the future of the dojo to him before heading down to Edo.

Goroemon had been warned that he was prone to sword-related misfortune and to exercise extreme caution, but he got into a fight with Akagawa Hanpei (a ronin of Wakisaka Awaji-no-kami, who was despised by all the chogaku groups). Hanpei had his brow split open by a Dojima geta and fled, barely able to crawl. Ten days later, on his way home from the residence of Uchoten Kurobe at Watanabe Bridge, the brawler was stabbed with a spear by an unknown assailant and lay dying. Before passing away, he told his son (the fourteen year old Masakichi) that his enemy was Akagawa Hanpei.

Masakichi immediately enrolled in the Araki Dojo in Kagurazaka, Ushigome, Edo, determined to avenge his father. Every day, he trained with the sounds of "putturi," "gururi," and "spon." Eventually, at Araki's command, he walked all over Edo in search of Hanpei.

Peering into a dojo on Meguro Hayatozaka, he saw the crescent-shaped birthmark between his master's eyebrows. It was indeed Hanpei. He reported this to Araki immediately. Finally, driven by a son's single-minded devotion, with a shout of "Ei!" and the sounds of "Ptsuri, Gurui, Spon,"

the revenge was successfully carried out. He received praise from the authorities, and the news even made the street newspapers. From then on, the number of new students at the Araki Dojo skyrocketed.

Gorokichi (Masakichi) returned to Osaka, where he became known as “Gorokichi the Brawler,” leaving behind a reputation as a hero that even surpassed that of his father, Goroemon the Brawler.

The above is the story, told in the form of a kodan, of the brawler Gorobei and his son, the young brawler Gorokichi, as recorded in “The Encyclopedia of Kodan Works” by Hideaki Yoshizawa.

I believe that the character referred to as Goroemon is likely the same person as Gorobei.

According to this, the story of the brawler Gorobei does indeed exist in the world of kodan.

However, this Gorobei does not have a birthmark on his face.

Since he is described as a strong man who made a name for himself as a chivalrous outlaw, his image is indeed closer to that of Ichikawa Utaemon.

Utaemon would not commit such a self-destructive act as forcing himself to commit seppuku with a sword whose blade he had dulled with a rock.

(First of all, I couldn’t understand why he was committing seppuku.)

In any case, he was a Gorobei who whined and complained constantly, hardly the image of a chivalrous outlaw.

Yet, the audience responded with thunderous applause.

Among the plays performed by this theater troupe, this “Gorobei the Brawler” seems to be a familiar and popular piece.

She looked it up online and found that this play is frequently performed by similar troupes all over the place.

But aside from that, I still have a memory of the story “Gorobei the Brawler” somewhere in my mind.

It's the story of a chivalrous hero who is strong yet gentle, bright, cheerful, and truly manly.

So, I asked my *acchitei* master, who possesses extensive knowledge of traditional performing arts.

"If you know anything about the story of Gorobei the Brawler, the chivalrous hero from Osaka, please tell me," I said.

My *acchitei* master is well-versed in the stories that appear in *rakugo*, *rokkoku*, and popular period dramas, and has heard most of them directly from the performance of the artists who actually perform them on the *rakugo* stage. (It was this *acchitei* master who introduced me to Hideaki Yoshizawa Sensei.)

I received a reply a few days later, but even he said he was not very familiar with the story of Gorobei the Brawler.

(I'm sorry, master. Even though I asked you such a trivial question, it seems you went to the trouble of looking into it. As always, I am deeply grateful. I will never forget your kindness. Please don't let this discourage you. If there is anything else I don't understand, please let me know.)

Hmm?

If that's the case, where and under what circumstances did I come to know this story?

As mentioned earlier, just before the curtain rose, when the *Kyogen* title was announced, "Ah, this is a play that begins in the precincts of Sumiyoshi Shrine in Osaka, where the protagonist, a chivalrous hero, rescues a town maiden from danger," I whispered into the ear of the woman sitting next to me.

The play began exactly as I'd described, but it immediately took an unexpected turn, and I found myself muttering, "Huh? That's not right. This isn't it."

It turns out my belief that I knew this play was a misconception, but that's fine, of course. As long as it's entertaining.

But after the performance ended, a strange, lingering unease remained in my heart.

(That's why I'm rambling on like this. If it had been a hopeless piece of trash, I would have forgotten it immediately.)

Why has this story of a plain, gloomy, utterly pathetic, and twisted "hero" (a character who can hardly be called a hero at all) become one of the most popular plays?

I just can't seem to understand that. I can't accept it.

Perhaps it is precisely because it is such a sinister, hopeless, miserable, and dark tale that I, too, am drawn to it and cannot bring myself to forget it.

And why is this gloomy play so popular with the public (even if it is only a small segment of the public?)

This mystery has strangely taken a firm hold on my heart and won't let go.

Let's review it once more.

The protagonist, played by a handsome young troupe leader, has a blue birthmark on his face, and because of this, he is (or so he believes) despised by women.

He has resigned himself to the fact that he will never find love in his lifetime.

(Yet this Gorobei is tall, with excellent proportions and a commanding presence. Truly a handsome, dignified man.)

Expressing his inferiority complex over the birthmark through exaggerated and passionate acting, well, given the existence of the Kabuki masterpiece "Sano Jirozaemon and the Yatsushashi Courtesan," it's not entirely unconvincing.

But the story goes that Gorobei's older brother takes a sword, strikes its blade against a stone until it blunts and becomes unusable, and hands it to his younger brother (even though he surely harbors no ill will towards his brother, this is a truly insidious and bizarre act). Knowing this, the younger brother ultimately plunges the sword into his own stomach, twists it back and forth, and dies in agony.

It's far too masochistic. I find it baffling.

In Kabuki plays, there are many scenes where a key character commits seppuku at the climax of the drama, and I can find them all convincing and moving, yet Gorobei's act alone remains a mystery to me.

Perhaps the audience applauds this tragedy, centered on a dark and twisted sense of inferiority, sensing in it a lofty, tragic beauty.

Perhaps the audience senses a perverse eroticism in seeing a fresh-faced, youthful leading man, full of charm, passionately perform this self-destructive tragedy with a birthmark on his face. Is the brawler Gorobei popular with the theatergoers because of that birthmark? If he didn't have it, would the audience not love Gorobei quite so much?

It is difficult to put into words, but perhaps the reason this play is supported lies in the fear of some dark aspect lurking in the depths of the human heart, the allure of the negative side, and the praise for it. Even a birthmark has a sensual quality. A birthmark is also a form of individuality.

For me, this production of "Gorobei the Brawler" certainly possessed the charm of an absurdist play. That is because all the actors were skilled. Their acting ability surpassed the script's shortcomings.

2010.6.16

濡木痴夢男のおしゃべり芝居 第百三十六回

Nureki Chimuo's Talking Theater Chapter 136

立ち絵の籠釣瓶(かごつるべ)

Kago Tsurube's Standing Illustrations

To my Acchitei Master (An Apology and a Request).

I apologize for the trouble I caused by, as usual, acting on a whim and getting carried away, even going so far as to ask questions of you, my busy master, regarding a figure like "Gorobei the Brawler," who is not widely known.

I hope to see you soon so I can apologize in person.

However, yesterday, I once again came up against my peculiar memory.

Yesterday, I spent the entire day in a storage room deep underground at a certain public museum at a prefecture near Tokyo (it was an impressive room, just like a nuclear fallout shelter).

It was a "job" I was asked to do by a curator at another public history museum, to research materials related to tachi-e (standing illustrations) created during the Meiji era.

I was accompanied by Mr. K, the curator, and the museum's photographer.

A woman named M-san, who operates the tachi-e figures, also joined us.

M-san is not only skilled at manipulating the puppet but also possesses a deep understanding of tachi-e, a now extinct form of street performance, making her a highly capable individual.

She occasionally serves as my assistant when I perform tachi-e.

The five of us shut ourselves away in a deep underground storage room and, from 10:30 AM to 5:30 PM, came face to face with over a thousand tachi-e figures that were active from the Meiji through the Taisho eras.

Every tachi-e has a story.

Unless they appear within that story and move about, tachi-e are nothing more than flat puppets made of paper and bamboo skewers.

For some reason, absolutely nothing remains, no records of the story's title, the names of the roles the paper puppets played, or the plot itself.

All that remains are the puppets themselves and the stages where they once moved.

My role was to look at the puppets alone and deduce their stories and the names of the plays they performed.

The tachie-e, packed into old cloth bags, were stored inside large boxes made of heavy-duty moisture proof material.

The paper puppets of the tachi-e are attached to bamboo skewers (the very common kind used for oden or yakitori).

They were no more than fifteen or sixteen centimeters tall.

Characters are depicted on both the front and back, with the designs varying slightly on each side.

For example, the front depicts a samurai with his hand on the hilt of his sword.

When you flip it over to the back, the samurai has drawn the sword and is raising it to strike.

From the ancient cloth bag, so faded that its original color was unrecognizable (clearly a handmade item from the Meiji era), a bundle emerged with the characters "sa no (佐の)" written in ink with a brush.

There were over a dozen of these "sa no" cloth bags, each marked with a number.

This indicates that the play "sa no" consists of over a dozen acts or scenes.

The moment I saw it, I exclaimed, "Ah, this is it!"

Being the very picture of frivolity, a trait my master knows all too well, I said, "Perhaps this is... (pausing dramatically)... this might be a puppet from the play 'Sano Jirozaemon,' that is, 'Kago Tsurube Sato no Eizame.'"

Then, from among the dozen or so cloth bags containing the “Sano” dolls, I asked them to open the one they thought contained the scene from the climax.

Sure enough, out came a doll of Sano Jirozaemon, sword raised, striking a dramatic pose atop the roof of a brothel, surrounded by officials from the police force. It was the climax of “The Slaughter of a Hundred Men in Yoshiwara.”

Jirozaemon’s doll is easily recognizable because of the birthmark on his face. There was also a doll of the courtesan Yatsunashi.

“I knew it. This ‘sa no’ refers to Sano Jirozaemon, and all the dolls in this bag are from “Kago Tsurube!” I said this with a slight air of superiority.

However, the “sa no” cloth bag also contained quite a few characters I didn’t recognize.

First, a samurai in traveling attire. Then, a female beggar who looked downright hideous.

And the traveling samurai who slashed that pitiful female beggar to death.

A rather suspicious traveling monk.

And there were also several poses of a sinister female ghost.

I had never once seen the Kabuki play “Kago Tsurube,” in which such characters appear.

Even though I’ve never heard or seen it in either rakugo or rokkoku, why did I say, “Ah, I knew it, this is the story of ‘Kago Tsurube?’”

Even though I’ve never seen or heard the scenes featuring the female beggar, the traveling samurai, the traveling monk, or the female ghost, why did I know immediately that this was the story of “Sano Jirozaemon?”

Even though I didn’t know the story of “Gorobei the Brawler,” a tale of a chivalrous outlaw set in Osaka, I had the frivolous habit of jumping the gun and saying “This is an interesting play,” and that habit reared its head here as well.

Just by looking at the characters with “sa no” written in ink and the small puppet of a traveling samurai slaying a female beggar, how did I know this was “Kago Tsurube?”

What on earth is going on inside my head?

That night (that is, last night), after returning home and resting a bit, I immediately looked it up.

Everything is a learning experience.

The book “Encyclopedia of Kodan Works” by my respected teacher, Hideaki Yoshizawa.

It is a truly invaluable book, packed to the brim across three thick volumes, with records of the human condition, where good and evil intertwine and joy and sorrow mingle, chronicling the lives of common people who lived and caused a stir from Japan’s ancient times through the end of the Meiji era. It captures the unfathomable lust and greed of men and women of all ages, their vivid ways of life, and their tumultuous stories.

I picked up the middle volume and opened it to the “Sa” page.

There it was.

It was there.

“Sano Jirozaemon”

Okubo Jirozaemon, a wealthy landowner from Hasabe Village in the Sano region of Yashu, was attacked by a bandit on the Kumagaya earthen embankment, just past Fukiage, while on his way to collect debts.

He was rescued by Tsuzuki Takesuke, who had been pursuing him from behind. Takesuke was a ronin who had formerly served Honda Tadayasu of Yamato Koriyama. Takesuke had won a duel against Yaegaki Mizuho, a favorite of his lord, and had been expelled from the domain. He had left Edo and was on his way to Shiga in Omi Province.

Takesuke accepted the invitation to become a guest at Jirozaemon’s house in Sano, and while teaching him swordsmanship and jujutsu, he fell ill and died.

At that time, he presented the Muramasa sword passed down from his grandfather, a blade with gold inlay bestowed by Fukushima Masanori and inscribed with the name “Kago Tsurube,” and left a final wish. “As this is a cursed sword, enshrine it in the temple along with my remains.”

He then gave Jirozaemon a sword made by Yusada. However, Jirozaemon did not entrust it to the temple but instead kept it as his personal sword for his travels. This ultimately led to Jirozaemon's downfall.

(Note by Nureki: In short, Sano Jirozaemon inherited the cursed sword Muramasa (Kago Tsurube), which a ronin named Tsuzuki Takesuke had bequeathed as his final possession on his deathbed. Keeping this cursed sword by his side would lead, several years later, to the great tragedy known as Jirozaemon's "The Slaughter of a Hundred Men in Yoshiwara." There is also a story, told as a single rakugo performance, about Tsuzuki Takesuke before he became a ronin. Much like "The Arabian Nights," the story branches out from a single trunk into twigs and leaves, and while each detail is vivid and fascinating, I have no choice but to omit them here.)

Now, let us go back in time to the Shotoku era. In Hasebe Village, Sano, in the province of Yashu, there lived a virtuous physician named Komatsubara Sansai, who had two sons. The elder was named Jirokichi, and the younger was named Yuseki.

The elder brother was a dissolute rogue who went to Edo and changed his name to Jirobei. There, he became involved with Okon, the concubine of Shibue Ukon, the steward of the Saijo Domain in Iyo.

Later, he became involved in a suspicious relationship with Onaru, the wife of Kisoji, a gambler from Kiryu.

After Kisoji's death, he married Onaru. When they had a child, he named him after his former name, Jirokichi. Persuaded by Jirokichi when the boy turned seven, Jirobei reformed his ways. He made a living selling small goods and gradually became a man of means. His younger brother, Yuseki, who had taken over the family medical practice, was also doing well

(Note by Nureki: Professor Yoshizawa's writing is truly free-spirited and unrestrained. At times, it suddenly shifts into the style of a traditional storytelling performance. There are also sections that have been boldly omitted. To make the text easier to understand, I have taken the liberty of organizing it somewhat. I hope you will forgive me for this.)

One year, when Jirobei was returning from Edo,

“...he decided to travel as far as Warabi that very day, so he made immediate preparations and set out from Sano Mata (Note: Jirobei’s regular lodging, Sano-ya-Mataemon’s palace). Passing through Suginokita, with the Kanda Myojin Shrine on his right, he climbed from Yushima to Hongo-dai, emerged onto Morikawa-cho from in front of the Kaga residence, turned left at Takasakiya and then right, reached Itabashi from Sugamo (omitted), and proceeded step by step until he arrived at the riverbank of Toda...”

Suddenly appearing before him was a female beggar suffering from syphilis, the wretched end of Okon, whom he had abandoned long ago.

At a loss, Jirobei kicked Okon into the Toda River and bludgeoned her to death with a flood-control stake.

The following year, on his return from Edo, he found himself once again on the banks of the Toda River.

On the same day of the same month as the previous year (October 11), the boatman had buried the murdered beggar woman beside the Jizo statue, at the base of a willow tree. Since then, rumors had spread of ghosts appearing and balls of fire rolling about.

That night, Jirobei stayed at Kyoya Kichibe’s inn in Warabi-juku, moaning, “Uhn, uhn, Okon, forgive me...”

Jirobei never recovered. Repenting his past misdeeds to Ishi and Jirokichi, he threw himself into the well.

By “past misdeeds,” he meant the murders of Okon and Onaru.

Forty-nine days later, Jirokichi changed his name to Jirozaemon and inherited his parents' home.

(From here on, this is another note by Nureki.)

Now that we've reached this point, it finally seems we can identify the characters appearing in the first scene of "sa no" in the tachi-e.

In other words, the travelling samurai in the bamboo-skewer doll was either Takeshi Tsuzuki or Jirobei Sano.

And the pitiful female beggar who is brutally murdered was a woman named Okon, who had syphilis and had originally been the concubine of a samurai from the Saijo Domain in Iyo.

Jirobei had an affair with Okon and then ruthlessly cast her aside.

Several years later, Okon, now a beggar woman suffering from syphilis, spotted Jirobei while he was traveling and clung to him, but Jirobei killed her, treating her as nothing more than a nuisance.

Okon became a ghost and appeared before Jirobei.

It seems Jirobei killed not only Okon, but also a woman named Onaru.

It is a truly grim and harrowing tale.

In the Meiji period, or perhaps even earlier, such details would likely have been described in great detail and performed on the storytelling stage.

And yet, the characters from the Kabuki play "Kago Tsurube: Hanamachi Suisei," which I know well, have not yet made an appearance in this rakugo story.

2010.6.22

濡木痴夢男のおしゃべり芝居 第百三十七回

Nureki Chimuo's Talking Theater Chapter 137

梅毒病みの女乞食おこん

Okon, the Beggar Woman Suffering from Syphilis

Based on the rakugo story “Sano Jirozaemon,” the kabuki play “Kago Tsurube: Sato no Eizame” was created, and it turned out to be quite entertaining.

Thanks to the individual ingenuity of the actors, it became a wildly popular play and is considered one of the masterpieces of the genre.

When I was fifteen or sixteen, I often performed the Hyogo-ya and En-kiri scenes from this “Kago Tsurube” at banquets, imitating the voice of the first Nakamura Kichiemon.

This is the famous line spoken by Jirozaemon as he is overcome with grief.

“...Oiran, that’s well, a bit too much, isn’t it.... The number of lovers changes every night. As a servant of Ukikawa Take, I don’t know if her heart has changed, perhaps today’s flower is better than yesterday’s, but outwardly, she’s set to finalize the matter of my redemption tonight. Last night, I didn’t even sleep at the inn, impatiently awaiting the long autumn night. I came here to admire the chrysanthemums and taste the dew of the red-light district, and to feel the dew on my skin. But to my surprise, she was cold and unfriendly. Well, being a country bumpkin like Jirozaemon, I don’t hold a grudge, and I suppose it can’t be helped that she turned me down, but why didn’t she just tell me that from the start? Every time I come to Edo, I’m rumored to be with someone from Sano in Yoshiwara, and once I’m up on the second floor, I’m even called out by my peers, the courtesans and their attendants. Am I supposed to just sit back and watch? You should have thought about how things work here and understood my situation...”

Ah, I’ve finally written down a line that isn’t even worth transcribing here.

This is probably why I’m such a theater and kabuki fanatic. I really am frivolous.

As for why I had the chance to attend such banquets when I was fifteen or sixteen, it was because in 1944 and the first half of 1945, that is, toward the end of the Pacific War, people around me were being drafted into the battlefield one after another, and farewell parties were held frequently for that reason.

At a farewell party where everyone was prepared to die, “A courtesan? Well, that’s a bit out of place, isn’t it?” I don’t think that would have been appropriate, but that was the extent of my art. Beyond that, I performed three or four dodoitsu poems.

When I strained my throat to imitate the voice of the late Kichiemon, the audience would applaud and cheer, and as a child, I felt quite proud of myself.

Sixty years ago, anyone would often perform Kabuki style voice impressions or dodoitsu as party entertainment. Dodoitsu can also contain quite explicit erotic content.

That aside, the story of “Sano Jirozaemon” featured in the “Encyclopedia of Rakugo Works,” as mentioned earlier, unfolds in a manner reminiscent of “The Arabian Nights,” with the narrative branching out in countless directions like the twigs of a tree, making it impossible to bring to a conclusive end.

It’s truly fascinating to read, but since it’s so long, I simply can’t present it here.

The life of the pitiful Edo-style courtesan Okon, who suffers from syphilis and is killed by Jirobei on the banks of the Toda River, is truly fascinating and full of twists and turns, possessing a strangely vivid quality that makes it worthy of being a novel in its own right.

Furthermore, there is a samurai named Takesuke Tsuzuki who first appears wielding the demon sword Kagotsurube. This character also has a wild past, and there is a separate story based on that past told as a kodan.

The script for the Kabuki play “Kago Tsurube: Hanamachi Suisei,” based on this rakugo story, is included in Volume 17 of Tokyo Sogen-sha’s “Masterpiece Kabuki Collection: Edo Sewa Kyogen Collection, Part 3.” According to this, the prologue begins abruptly with the “Nakano-cho First Encounter Scene.”

Then, the oogiri consists of:

“The Scene at Tachibana-ya in Nakano-cho”

“The Scene at Hyogo-ya in Edo”

“The Scene of the Arrest at the Great Gate”

The “oogiri” refers to the final scene.

However, in the script by the author, Kawakaku Shinichi III, there is a scene where the female beggar O-Sei is brutally murdered on the banks of the Toda River for Jirobei's sake, as Koji Toita writes in his commentary for the "Masterpieces of Kabuki" collection.

In the rakugo version, the character is Okon, but in the Kabuki version, she is O-sei.

Koji Toita's commentary is concise yet captures the essence of the story, making the complex plot easy to understand. It is clear and straightforward.

To compare it with the story as told in the kodan, I will transcribe it here.

Jirozaemon's father, Sano Jirobei, married a courtesan, but abandoned her when she fell ill. That woman, named O-Sei, has since fallen into poverty is now a beggar.

The story begins with O-Sei happens to meet Jirobei at an inn in Warabi, whereupon he takes her to Todagawa-hara and brutally murders her.

Jirobei had two sons, Kanbei and Jirozaemon. The elder was a farmer, and the younger a silk merchant. Jirobei, cursed by O-sei, was afflicted by the same virus and died in agony.

(Excerpt)

Now, let me explain how this sword, the Muramasa known as "Kago Tsurube," which gives the story its title, came into Jirozaemon's possession.

Takesuke Tsuzuki, who had defeated Yaegaki Monta in a spear tournament held in the Honda domain and thus restored his honor, was ambushed by Monta at the edge of the riding ground and struck him down with his own sword.

After that, he broke off his engagement to Chiyo, the daughter of a senior councilor, and set out on a journey of wandering. In Chigane Matsubara, in the province of Yasu, he rescued Jirozaemon, who was being threatened by a gang of ruffians. As a result of this encounter, he stayed at Jirozaemon's house where he fell ill.

He is eventually killed by the villains who came to settle the score from the incident at Chigane Matsubara, but just before his death, he presents Jurozaemon with a sword as a token of gratitude for the hospitality he received.

In the fourth act of the original play, "The Scene at the Sano Residence: The Presentation of the Heirloom," Takesuke says:

"This sword is a single blade from a set of heirlooms that my father, Takebe, received on his deathbed. The Tsuzuki family is not a hereditary retainer of the Honda clan. Rather, we were once vassals of the Ishida clan, which met its end at Sawayama in Omi Province. Therefore, although we do not possess the Muramasa sword, which is forbidden by your household, fortunately, this blade is unsigned. It is said to cut through even water without spilling a drop, and for this reason, it has been passed down through our family for generations under the name 'Kago Tsurube.' As a token of gratitude for your care over the past year, I have passed it on to Lord Jurozaemon. If you cherish it as a talisman and keep it sheathed, never drawing it, throughout your life, it will not bring you any ill fortune. However, when the time comes to draw it, it will inevitably cause harm to you, and it will not be sheathed until blood is drawn. Recognize it as a cursed blade, and take care not to handle it carelessly."

When Jirozaemon traveled to Edo on business, he fell for a woman named Yatsunashi in Yoshiwara. After frequenting her establishment, he was eventually rebuffed. Determined to kill her, he returned to his home province, falsely claiming he would serve as a samurai in the Western Provinces. He bequeathed his fortune to his older brother and arranged for his porter, Jiroku, to marry his niece, Oshizu.

He sets out carrying a sword he had sharpened in Takesaki, but a monk named Kugetsu, who had happened to be present when Jirobei killed Osei at Toda River, observes Jirozaemon and prophesies that he will meet his end before long.

In short, this story revolves around an unfortunate incident occurring as retribution for the father's evil deeds, and the ominous sword is intertwined with this. The fact that Jirozaemon became a man disfigured by pockmarks is also presented as a matter of karma. (The rest is omitted.)

"Kago Tsurube," which is frequently performed at venues such as the Kabuki-za (currently under renovation), the Shimbashi Enbujo, and the National Theater, begins with the "Nakano-cho First Encounter" scene. Therefore, nothing is known about the events preceding it.

However, reading this commentary by Koji Toita makes it clear that this play is a terrifying tale of fate involving a cursed sword known as "Kago Tsurube."

I read Mr. Toita's commentary several decades ago, and at the time, I thought, "What a grotesque and fascinating tale of fate this is."

That memory came flooding back when I came across the tachi-e in a room within the massive archive in the basement of the Prefectural Museum.

In other words, the doll of the pitiful female beggar is Okon (O-Sei in Kabuki), the traveling samurai is Takesuke Tsuzuki (or Jirobei), and the traveling monk is Kugetsu, who witnessed Okon's murder.

The blood-soaked female ghost is, of course, the manifestation of Okon's vengeful spirit.

Given that the location is the riverbank at Toda, everything falls into place.

In other words, my acchitei kocchi master.

The true identity of the Osaka chivalrous rogue "Gorobei the Brawler," who caused trouble for the master.

Couldn't it be that this too, was something that had been stuck at the very bottom of my distant, distant memory, and which, having found a trigger, suddenly came back to life.

When I think about it that way, it all makes sense, and I even went so far as to ask the master about it. I'm truly sorry for the trouble I caused you.

It seems that when there is an interesting original story, the content changes little by little every time the performers change or depending on the circumstances of the troupe staging it. Over the long years, even if the general outline of the story remains the same, it can end up taking on quite a different form.

Personally, whenever I've performed a play based on an original work, I've taken quite a few liberties with the adaptation.

The "Goshite Suzukamori" from tachi-e, which will be performed six times at the History Museum this time, is precisely that kind of production.

The final scene, in which blood-soaked severed heads rain down upon Shirai Gonpachi, who has killed many people, and he is tormented by their vengeful spirits, is entirely my own creation.

I even considered reimagining the much older "Kago Tsurube" story, featuring characters like Sano Jirozaemon and the courtesan Yatsushashi, as a new tachi-e production, with "The Murder of the Female Beggar Okon" serving as the climax.

If we establish that the unfortunate, syphilitic beggar woman, who is killed by her former husband Jirobe, was actually the mother who gave birth to Jirozaemon, the story takes on an even darker, more grim tone.

Okon appears as a terrifying ghost before her former husband, who killed her, and the child she bore him.

The image of a ghost writhing in agony, torn between her hatred for her husband and her love for her child, a tangled web of love and hate, strikes me as quite powerful.

(Though I feel like I saw a similar story quite a while ago in "The Peeping Mechanism.")

I get the feeling that no matter how much humans pretend to be peaceful and harmless, the moment you look behind the scenes, a terrifying karma seems to be swirling there.

I have a desire to depict that karma to the very end.

When it comes to this, it will result in a tale of fate and karma that is entirely different from, and far more tragic and grim, than "Kago Tsurube," which is known to many theater lovers for its climactic scene where Sano Jirozaemon and Yatsushashi cut ties, "A courtesan, well, that's a bit... out of line, isn't it..."

Perhaps “Gorobei the Brawler” too, having undergone a similar evolution over the long years, performed by various troupes here and there, gradually transformed into the twisted, gloomy tragedy of a chivalrous hero lamenting his scarred body.

Ah, and one more thing.

There must have been a large audience in every era that supported such plays.

After all, theater exists because of its audience.

It is conceivable that, after being solemnly refined over many years by numerous theater companies, a complex, absurd flavor of sorts was exuded and emanated from that play. It was a stage production with a truly mysterious charm.

Or perhaps, thanks to “Hanafubuki” that day, she and I were able to witness a rare and precious play that one rarely gets to see.

2010.6.23

濡木痴夢男のおしゃべり芝居 第百三十八回

Nureki Chimuo's Talking Theater Chapter 138

不遇の芸能

The Unfortunate World of Show Business

According to the essay “The History of ‘Tachi-e’” by Hiro Nagai (published by Geisosha/Etoku), the seventh line on the first page reads, “...an unfortunate art form that vanished in just over thirty years since its inception...”

That is exactly right.

Tachi-e is, after all, an unfortunate art form...

It was founded in Tokyo in the 1890s and was loved by children and a small group of enthusiasts until the late Taisho era, but due to the difficulty of its production and operation, there were soon no longer any practitioners.

The production and operation themselves are not particularly difficult.

It can be done with a little know-how, dexterity, and a sense of theatricality.

It's not so much difficult as it is troublesome.

It takes a lot of effort and time, and for what it's worth, the rewards are few.

It is an art form that appeared in the 1890s and vanished by the end of the Taisho era.

If the rewards had been greater (if it had brought money or fame), it surely wouldn't have disappeared so easily.

A neglected art form.

The dictionary defines "neglected as "...unlucky, not having attained a status or circumstances befitting one's talent or character."

I see. Well then, perhaps I should try my hand at reviving this art form.

And so, being the contrarian that I am, I decided to give it a shot. That was sixteen years ago.

I am well aware that this is presumptuous.

I have little interest in performing arts that are currently thriving.

On top of being a contrarian, I have a strong desire to show off.

And I am confident in my ability to draw pictures and deliver monologues in the style of kabuki.

Well now, you speak with quite a lot of confidence, don't you?

If someone were to say that to me, I would reply, "Yes, I do have that kind of confidence."

I am always an overconfident (that is to say, reckless) person.

However, it was a form of performing art that I could not have challenged without that level of confidence and recklessness.

Even so, sixteen years ago, during that time when my regular work was extremely busy, why on earth did I decide to take on the troublesome task of creating tachi-e.

I asked myself what kind of mood I was in back then, but I already know the answer.

I've always loved theater.

Regardless of complicated reasoning or theatrical theory, I simply love theater.

Whenever I picture actors on stage in their costumes and recite kabuki lines out loud, I'm always entranced and get into a wonderful, almost intoxicated mood.

You could say that my love of theater is something like my fate (probably inherited from my father and mother).

It has been glued to my back since birth, and no matter how hard I try to shake it off, it won't go away.

I suspect this fate will never leave me until the day I die.

But if I may add a personal note, my love of theater is somewhat twisted.

No matter how much I love it, I hesitate to fully immerse myself in the world of theater. That is, to actually become an actor or a theater professional.

I am simply a coward.

I lack the boldness to fully commit to becoming a professional.

That is because I know how harsh the professional theater world can be.

First of all, there are financial struggles. I am afraid of poverty.

I know that the training, effort, and patience required to master a true art form are no small feat.

My physical and mental strength simply couldn't withstand that kind of hardship.

I hate undergoing grueling training.

I want to take it easy as much as possible and bask in a good mood (I know it's selfish, but that's how I really feel).

I am a cowardly person.

If we were to revive an art form that died out long ago, people would be surprised.

Some might even look at me with respect.

Perhaps because I have a strong sense of inferiority, I like being respected by others. I hate being looked down upon.

And another reason that made me take on the challenge of tachi-e, now that I think about it, this reason might have been the stronger one.

I wrote that it was the busiest time of my regular job.

During that time, when I was constantly tying up naked women with rope every single day, writing manuscripts from morning until night and from night until morning under four or five different pen names for those kinds of magazines, the more physically and mentally exhausted I became, the more I may have felt a deep hunger in the depths of my heart.

Back then, sixteen years ago, the image of SM in publications had already become narrowly defined and rigidly fixed within a set mold.

It's easier, as a money-making venture, to establish an image and fix it in a single direction.

In my real life, I, too, was contributing to that easier path. It's easier this way to earn an income.

But, "no, no," I kept murmuring in the corner of my heart.

SM had to be something freer, more diverse, unconventional, and interesting.

A sense of hunger had arisen in a part of my heart.

Wasn't it that sense of hunger that drove me toward tachi-e when it spread?

If I had felt fully satisfied with my daily work, I surely wouldn't have had the leisure to let my heart be captivated by tachi-e amidst all that busyness.

Somehow, the conversation has strayed off course.

I must get back on track.

In any case, I became obsessed with creating tachi-e, that underappreciated art form.

It was an enjoyable task.

It was a dream. If it weren't fun, I wouldn't bother with the hassle of making dolls.

On the stage of paper dolls lay a world of stories that was free and unrestrained.

The paper dolls I created came to life and moved exactly as I imagined and desired.

There was my own SM world, one that expanded endlessly and exactly as I wished, something I could never find in the SM work I did to earn a living.

As someone who loves theater, the SM world I prefer is fundamentally based on aestheticism, fantasy, and romance, and is rich in narrative. SM that lacks a sense of narrative is not the kind of SM I like.

(Several of the dolls I created during this period for my tachi-e, including “Oshichi the Greengrocer” and “O-Tomi the Slashed,” are currently on loan to the Sex Industry Museum. There are also paper dolls of men to be paired with them, a woman bound by officials after committing a crime, a woman undergoing torture by being hung upside down, a female prisoner being paraded on a horse, and a female prisoner tied to a stake. Though the dolls are crude, they surely embody the passion of SM. I hope to someday stage these two tachi-e plays, “Oshichi the Greengrocer” and “O-Tomi the Slashed” at the Sex Industry Museum and put on a performance. Of course, I wrote all the scripts myself. I also created “The Well-Known Suzukamori,” which will be performed six times over two days at a nearby prefectural history museum, around the same time. This one features nearly twenty figures.)

Here, I would like to include an excerpt from the aforementioned text by Mr. Keio Nagai.

“...The delivery of the lines was a high-pitched, recitative style that blended elements of traditional theater (namely kabuki), storytelling, rakugo, and even film narration, with sound effects such as taiko drums and clappers added to the mix. This can be considered the prototype for the narrative style of later single-panel kamishibai. However, the lines spoken by each character were given even greater emphasis than in kamishibai because the standing paper dolls were independent figures, one for each character.”

The fact that the dolls’ lines played such an important role was what satisfied my sense of self-worth.

I’m quite good at delivering lines in the kabuki style. To brag a little, I’ve actually been sincerely praised by a famous kabuki actor, a true master of the art.

Next, the manipulation of the puppets.

For me, this is even harder than delivering the lines.

What’s more, you’re supposed to move the puppets while speaking the lines.

However, with the arrival of Miss M, the problem of puppet manipulation was solved.

I took charge of the opening recitation, the lines, and the clappers, while Miss M specialized in operating the puppet.

At the time, I was serializing a novel depicting the world of circus performers in a magazine called “Moonlight.”

Miss M read that novel avidly. In other words, she was a devoted reader.

She was also a woman with a very strong interest in street performances and sideshow acts. The depth of her affection for those kinds of performances and the performers often left me in awe.

Had it not been for the arrival of Miss M to operate the puppets, my tachi-e would likely have ended at the stage of simply making puppets by attaching paper to bamboo skewers.

Although tachi-e are supposed to be a solo act, thanks to her, albeit in an unconventional way, they were able to achieve intricate movements and acting.

Here, I would like to quote another excerpt from Mr. Keio Nagai’s writing.

“...To transform the puppet, one simply uses the thumb and index finger to spin a thin bamboo skewer 180 degrees. Though the action is simple, if the rotation stops midway or goes too far, the effect is completely lost. In other words, the ‘pause’ created by the subtle movement of the fingertips was the greatest highlight of the still images. Furthermore, it was the pauses between lines of dialogue that guided the rhythmic transitions in the characters’ movements. For still illustrations, the pauses between lines were more important than in later forms like kamishibai or film narration. The screen transitions accompanying the dialogue, those fleeting moments of <pause> were precisely what made the still illustrations so fascinating.”

This passage by Mr. Nagai accurately captures the challenges of animating characters in tachi-e and the difficulty of timing dialogue.

A single person must perform this difficult art of puppetry and dialogue simultaneously.

It is simply impossible.

This is precisely why tachi-e have come to be regarded as a neglected art form. In other words, unlike kamishibai, it was not something that could be done by a single person or just by anyone.

So I decided to entrust the manipulation of the puppets to Miss M and concentrate solely on the dialogue myself.

If it's just the dialogue, it's easy, and since I don't have to worry about anything else, it feels good.

My tachi-e became pure pleasure for me.

Once again, I would like to quote Mr. Nagai's writing.

"...The dramatic characteristic of the 'tachi-e' performances was that scenes were constructed not through flat, narrative explanations of the story, but through the interplay of lines delivered by each individual performer. Therefore, the performers of these tachi-e shows were required to master kabuki-style delivery techniques, as well as possess dexterity in their fingertips. Though they were merely street-corner candy sellers and minor entertainers, these men were passionate about kabuki and understood the subtleties of the art. They took great pride in freely directing the actors within the small proscenium and in orchestrating the microcosm of the theater. The fact that they were called 'kabuki-ya' by children and performed their stand-up plays dressed in striped kimonos and white tabi socks was a clear reflection of their confidence."

And, since this is something Nureki Chimuo would do, starting with "The Well-Known Suzukamori," the kyogen plays naturally take on a distinctly local flavor, featuring works like "Oshichi the Greengrocer" and "O-Tomi the Slashed."

2010.6.28

濡木痴夢男のおしゃべり芝居 第百三十九回

Nureki Chimuo's Talking Theater Chapter 139

「人質」は只今編集中

“Hostage,” Currently in Editing

I received a letter from my old friend Mizuki Kageo.

It was a letter that had been placed in an envelope, stamped, and sent through mailboxes and post offices, carried by human hands and feet, and delivered right to my door.

I can almost feel Mizuki's warmth in the elegant, high-quality paper envelope. It is such a wonderful and heartfelt letter that I definitely want to record it here in this “Talking Theater.”

(I have previously shared a letter from Mizuki here. Of course, I obtained her permission for that as well.)

To record it means that I will transcribe Mizuki's letter, word for word, with a pen. This allows me to read and savor her feelings and thoughts, which is a valuable learning experience.

I believe my work is supported by such gracious people.

(Omitted) As the day of filming for “Hostage” drew nearer, eight days, five days, three days, two days, and one day before, the director's determination sparked my anticipation and curiosity. I'm sure other readers felt the same way.

I assume the filming of “Hostage” went smoothly, but editing still remains. In video and film production, if there is a problem with any one of the stages, planning, scriptwriting, directing, filming, or editing, the final work will end up mediocre, no matter how excellent the others may be. This isn't unique to this project, but collaboration with a close-knit, talented team is essential. I look forward to seeing a wonderful film take shape through ongoing discussion with the staff.

As Nureki Sensei is already aware, when it comes to the world of bondage, I have a stronger interest in images than in text. Moreover, rather than overly explicit, highly stimulating content or cruel acts of inflicting pain, I find the utmost beauty in a lovely woman who has been deprived of her freedom and trembles in fear of humiliation and degradation amidst torment. Personally, I am strongly drawn to works that convey a sense of narrative.

A beautiful woman is deprived of her freedom, stripped of her clothes, her body toyed with, and just as she is about to be violated, salvation appears and she escapes the humiliation...

I strongly prefer stories where a beautiful woman, even when her chastity is in danger, is rescued. Or at least where the story gives the impression that she will be rescued.

You described this as “shame beauty,” and I believe this is precisely the same concept as the “beauty in peril” that I have long sought. To put it in the language of “Yamato kotoba”¹⁰, perhaps it could be described as “the beauty that seeps out from fear and bashfulness.” That’s a bit wordy, isn’t it? After all, nothing can rival the necessary, sufficient, and concise expression of “shame beauty.”

It is only natural that many scenes of “beauty in peril” in movies and TV shows fit this description.

Keiko Matsuzaka, playing Murasaki-zukin (the wife of Minamimachi Magistrate Toyama Saemon-no-jo), falls into the hands of villains, is stripped of her clothes, and, wearing only a long under-kimono, is gagged and nearly raped.

¹⁰ The native Japanese language

Or the scene where Yuriko Hishimi's character, a Playgirl (an international insurance investigator), is captured, bound while wearing only a slip, and has her breasts exposed... and so on.

While the restraint of beautiful actresses, the threat to their chastity, and the standard "beauty rescue" are all fine, it's a bit of a shame that the rescue comes a little too soon. That said, this is probably the limit for public broadcasts.

In the 1950s, as featured in the magazine Uramado, an era of government crackdowns on the sex industry, particularly SM, the photo spreads directed by the master contained a "beauty in peril" theme that wasn't too explicit, and they have become my personal treasures.

In photos by Osamu Fujisawa...

"The Room with a Sofa Bed" (March 1962 issue) (Models: Yuko Amagi, Yae Satsuki)

"A Maiden Seeking Salvation" (Model: Rie Haruna)

Photographed by Hisashi Yoshida

"Acting Out Being Cornered" (June 1962 issue), "The Room with No Escape" (Model: Ethel Monica),

"The Hannya Mask" (Model: Marimo Tani).

"The Woman at the Stone Quarry," "The Song of Waiting in Vain," "The Room of Shame" (Model: Nagisa Kage)

While these works may have been compromises made under severe repression, the fact that the rope work and nudity are restrained leaves room for the reader's imagination, evoking a

sense of beauty and eroticism far greater than that found in today's depictions of full nudity, spread legs, and penetration.

To use a musical analogy, the works from Uramado could be described as "standard jazz," while recent works are more like fleeting "pop songs" or merely noisy "rock."

In the world of jazz, Sonny Rollins, a jazz artist who continues to play the tenor saxophone even after turning 80, moving the hearts of fans, is still going strong.

Similarly, I take my hat off to your passion and spirit of inquiry, which never cease in their pursuit of true bondage.

I look forward to the completion of Hostage.

Blessed with an excellent and understanding producer and staff, I pray for your continued success and good health.

水月影緒。

Mizuki Kageo

Thank you very much, Mizuki-san.

By now, Ryu the cameraman and Producer Yamanouchi are probably editing Hostage.

On set, I made sure everything proceeded exactly as I had written in the script.

While Producer Yamanouchi handles the overall direction, once the cameras start rolling, I take the lead in directing the actors, so I naturally end up handling the finer details of the direction.

Since the cameraman is the one actually filming the movements of the two women and me from an objective perspective, how our movements are captured, or perhaps cut out, depends entirely on Cameraman Ryu's artistic judgement. That is left entirely to his split-second decisions. I don't have time to interfere.

On a set like this, the cameraman also takes on the role of a director.

Both planner Nakahara Rutsu and Producer Yamanouchi actively suggest good ideas during breaks in filming, so the content should be becoming subtly richer.

The two actresses, Fuyuki and Shion, have shown incredible reactions on numerous sets, reactions I've never seen before.

They showed me genuine reactions, not mere acting.

Both of them understood my desire to capture and preserve a record just for ourselves, and they responded with grace.

When it was over, I couldn't help but say,

"You both did great. I'd like to give you a perfect score, but I'll give you 120 points instead. Thank you, thank you!"

I bowed my head to the two women from the bottom of my heart.

I gave the entire staff 120 points. No, 150 points.

I was intoxicated by a sense of happiness, thinking, "When people who truly love this world come together to work in this field, can it really make you feel this good?" There is nothing left for me to do.

Leaving the studio, Nakahara-san and I walked alone to the station, and on the way, we stopped to rest inside the grounds of a temple.

"Even if a massive earthquake struck right here and now, causing a fire that burned all the tapes we just shot, I wouldn't care anymore," I told her.

I felt that since we had filmed something this remarkable, since we were able to film it, it didn't matter what happened next.

I don't want to show such a fun (and embarrassing) video to anyone.

"Even if I did show it, no one would understand it anyway, so maybe it's better if it just disappears like this," I added.

I've done what I wanted to do and had this much fun, so I'm satisfied. Completely satisfied.

If I showed this to the colleagues I've worked with to create SM products for commercial use all this time:

There's no nudity, there's no spread-eagle bondage, there's no vibrator insertion.

There are no sex scenes, are there? No suspension, is there? Who would even watch something like this?

They're bound to say things like that.

My butt started to hurt because it was a wooden bench.

I'd been in the temple grounds for over an hour, half of it just talking to myself about such trivial things.

"You're saying that because you're in a good mood, but Yamanouchi-san and Ryu-kun have a tough job ahead of them," Nakahara-san said.

By "tough job," he meant, of course, the editing work. It takes time and effort.

As always, she sees the bigger picture better than I do. My perspective is narrow.

After that, we went to the "Tenya" restaurant in front of the station and ate cold udon noodles dipped in cold broth.

It was thick, chewy, and delicious udon. The broth had a rich flavor and was delicious.

So, Mizuki Kageo, thank you for your letter.

I'll get in touch with you as soon as Hostage is ready. Please take a look. And I'd appreciate your feedback.

2010.7.3

濡木痴夢男のおしゃべり芝居 第百四十回

Nureki Chimuo's Talking Theater Chapter 140

恥ずかしいったらありやしないよ

I'm So Embarrassed, I Can't Even Stand It

To Nakahara Rutsu-san. My, what a careless thing I've done.

This is exactly what they mean by "I'm deeply ashamed."

In last night's "Nureki Newsletter," I mistakenly referred to the current (fourth-generation) Sakata Tojuro as Nakamura Tojuro, and sent it off via fax without correcting it.

That was beyond careless. I couldn't be more embarrassed. I'll explain myself now.

I wrote that Tojuro has two sons. The eldest is Nakamura Kanzaku (whose stage name is, of course, Nakamuraya), and the second is Nakamura Sensaku (whose stage name is also, naturally, Nakamuraya). I also wrote that Nakamura Kazutaro, the son of Kanzaku, will be appearing in the role of a maidservant in "Migaeshi Zazen," which we will be seeing next month at the National Theater.

Furthermore, getting carried away, I even went so far as to include a sort of family tree for this lineage, starting with the previous generation (the second) Nakamura Ganjiro.

I am of the same generation as the current Sakata Tojuro (we are only one year apart), and I have seen the Tojuro of the Nakamura Senshaku era more than anyone else (I've even watched movies starring Senshaku), so I inadvertently wrote Nakamura.

It's truly embarrassing. So embarrassing it's not even worth trying to explain.

There's also Sawamura Tojuro from Kinokuniya, so it gets a bit confusing. This Kinokuniya Tojuro also appeared in Toei period films during his Seishiro era, and I've seen him a few times myself.

In short, the stage names of the current Sakata Tojuro's sons and grandsons are all Narikoma-ya, while only the head of the family, Tojuro, goes by Yamishiro-ya.

I've been watching Sakata Tojuro since the days when he was known as Nakamura Senshaku, back when he trained under Bando Tsurunosuke (now Nakamura Tonjiro) and Takechi Tetsuji in what was known as "Takechi Kabuki," and they were called the "Senkaku" duo. (I'm also just one generation apart from Tennojiya.)

I've seen countless performances, including "Sonezaki Shinju," where his father, the second-generation Nakamura Ganjiro, played Tokubei and Sensaku gained fame as Ohatsu.

Back then, I preferred Ganjiro over Sensaku.

When I first saw the second-generation Ganjiro's "Kamiji," with his soft, supple movements, at the Kabukiza: "So this is the real deal when it comes to the Kamigata Kabuki's leading men!"

I was so astonished I nearly fell off my seat. That was sixty years ago.

Until then, I had only seen Bando Takewaka's Jihei and Ichikawa Fukunosuke's Koharu (and Osan).

I still cannot forget the shock I felt when I first encountered the traditional wagoto¹¹ style of Kamigata Kabuki.

And yet, oh, what an embarrassing mistake!

It was such a foolish error, writing Ichikawa Danjuro as Onoe Danjuro.

Last night, shortly after I faxed you that "Nureki Newsletter," you called me and even though we talked for two whole hours, I still hadn't noticed the mistake.

I'm ashamed and frustrated at how slow I am to catch on.

(Damn it! It was Sakata Tojuro, not Nakamura Tojura!)

It wasn't until about fifteen minutes after I hung up the phone with you that I realized this.

(Something had been nagging at me all along.)

Although the "Nureki Newsletter" is just a personal letter, please do correct it.

You must remember that two or three years ago, when "Nureki Chimuo (濡木痴夢男)" was printed as "Nureki Chimuo (濡木痴夢夫)" on posters and flyers, I got so angry that I didn't go to the venue where I had been invited.

¹¹ Wagoto is a style of acting for love scenes

Yesterday, I sat at my desk writing a manuscript starting at four in the morning, so I was a little tired.

I finished writing the thirteenth installment of “Dear Sir, This is Nureki Chimuo, Bondage Specialist,” a serialized story in a magazine published by Sindy Publishing, titled “The Bondage Drama ‘Hostage’ is Complete,” all in one go, and I thought, “That’s right, before I send this manuscript to the publisher, I should have Fuyuki-san read it first.”

Then I called her.

“Do you want to read the manuscript I wrote about the shoot the other day?” I asked.

“Wow, I’d love to! Please send it to me!” She replied in a cheerful, lively voice.

It was such a lovely voice, full of vitality and warmth, that I felt somehow reassured and happy myself.

At the very end of that manuscript, I had written the following:

Fuyuki Sawato, Shion Kasumi.

You both did an absolutely wonderful job. You showed us something beyond just acting. It was truly moving.

As I write these words now, I am filled with a passion I’ve never felt before, and I want to express my deepest gratitude to you both.

Once editing is finished, let’s hold a private screening of this film, just for us. And then, let’s discuss our next project.

It feels awkward to say something like this directly to you in person. It would seem too theatrical and lack sincerity, so I’m writing it here in an article for another magazine and sending it to you.

“I wrote a letter to you today, too. It should arrive tomorrow or the day after, so please read it!” Fuyuki-san said this in an even brighter, more cheerful voice.

I like people who speak clearly in a bright, energetic voice. I’m very sensitive to the quality of people’s voices.

I dislike people who speak in a dull voice, mumbling to themselves.

Avoiding people I dislike is my number one secret to staying healthy.

“Is that so? Thank you. I’ll be sure to read it.”

I feel like I’ll live a long life if I only associate with people I like. I am now eighty years and six months old.

Come to think of it, right after filming for Hostage wrapped up, Fuyuki-san presented me with a wonderfully appealing project.

After the test screening for Hostage, let’s all discuss Fuyuki-san’s idea, or rather, her wish.

After that, I wrote a manuscript for a place called Web Sniper.

As Nakahara Rutsu well knows, once I get going, I write manuscript after manuscript without stopping.

I get carried away with everything I do. If I don’t get carried away, I can’t do anything (well, I suppose that’s true for everyone).

This is the tenth installment of a serialized series with the shameless title “Nureki Chimuo’s Testament of Obscene Pleasure.” They actually pay me a proper fee for this series, too.

This time, the title is “While Watching the Stage.”

It’s a story about me enjoying myself by making various physical contact with the woman sitting next to me while watching a play.

It’s all true. Of course, I’m on good terms with the woman sitting next to me. If I did something like that to a stranger, it would obviously be sexual harassment and I’d instantly become a criminal.

I won’t even look at a woman unless we’re really close. Once we became close, I get clingy and persistent, pressing myself against her shamelessly like a baby. I’m relatively faithful to my own desires (I suppose everyone is like that. It’s only natural, isn’t it?).

But I seem to have particularly extreme likes and dislikes.

At a party, the moment a woman I disliked came up to me and grabbed my hand, I was so terrified I screamed.

“Stop it! My hand will rot!”

When I shook off her grip and ran away, Rutsu-san, you were right there watching and laughing your head off, weren't you?

That merciless laugh of yours back then.

Anyway, any woman who reaches out to hold an 80 year old man's hand is bound to be creepy.

After that, I wrote an article for a magazine related to the performing arts about my tachi-e performance.

I thought it was still a long way off, but lo and behold, this tachi-e performance was actually coming up next month.

Three performances a day, for a total of six performances over two days.

Each performance lasts about thirty minutes. It's a performance where I shout at the top of my lungs, delivering the lines of ten different characters all by myself.

Through those storytelling connections, we had made plans to go to Yokohama together with Rutsu-san to see the assembly and mechanisms of the "Peep Show."

It's a rare chance to see the mechanisms and assembly of street performances from the Meiji, Taisho, and early Showa periods, which are hard to come by these days, as well as a picture story titled "The Ghost's Bullying of the Stepchild." Since opportunities like this are so few and far between, I absolutely must go on, even if it takes the whole day.

Well, but more than anything else, I finally have to get started on the first volume of "The World of Minomura Ko" (working title), co-authored by Nureki Chimuo and Nakahara Rutsu, which has been commissioned by Kawade Shobo Shinsha.

I've already promised the publisher that I'll write the manuscript as a series and publish a total of four volumes.

The traces of Minomura Ko, which Nakahara Rutsu, Director of the Sex Industry Museum, diligently selected from a vast collection of materials three months ago.

(I imagine this alone required a tremendous amount of effort and attention to detail. Thank you.)

I must engage with that collection of materials earnestly and meticulously, inviting Minomura Ko into my soul and bringing him back to life.

This is not a task I can undertake lightly. Writing about Minomura Ko will, naturally, mean writing about myself, and it will also mean writing about Nakahara Rutsu herself. I will be laying myself bare.

That was mainly what we talked about on the phone for two hours last night, wasn't it?

Minomura Ko's many artistic achievements, centered on his paintings, and your keen eye for observation and criticism regarding them.

And it would be interesting if my own observations and critiques of him were to become a sort of comparison, or even a confrontation, with yours.

At times, I feel it might turn into a heated exchange, but in any case, this is not a task I can undertake with a half-hearted attitude.

I don't want to write the kind of sickeningly sweet, nothing-but-praise articles that appeared in a couple of magazines when he died.

There will likely be times when it feels like tearing my own flesh and spitting out blood.

Let's encourage and support one another, and work together to see this collaboration, this task bestowed upon us by heaven, through to the end.

My prediction is that it will be an enjoyable project and that we'll achieve good results.

Please correct "Sakata Tojuro" for me.

Oh, I'm so embarrassed, I can't even stand it.

2010.7.16

濡木痴夢男のおしゃべり芝居 第百四十一回

Nureki Chimuo's Talking Theater Chapter 141

おぬし、できるな

You're Pretty Good at This

To Master K. From Nureki.

I have read your letter.

I apologize for my rudeness the other day.

You went out of your way to come all that distance just to see me, yet because I was constantly in such a hectic and tense state, we weren't able to talk properly.

It was a shoot at the studio where I was tying up a female model (Fuyuki Sawato) with rope while photographer Kei took pictures.

You silently observed only that specific shoot, which was for a magazine's photo spread, and then you left.

It was probably only about three or four hours.

I carelessly wrote "I apologize for the other day" as a matter of formality, but to tell you the truth, I hardly feel that I was rude to you at all.

Far from being rude, I felt nothing but friendliness toward you. No, more than that, I was filled with a sense of affection for you from start to finish.

This is quite unusual for me.

When I'm tying up a female model for work, I almost always feel a sense of displeasure toward people who watch me and the woman with raw curiosity.

Sometimes I even let that annoyance show clearly on my face. In situations like this, I'm quite a sensitive person.

But I didn't feel that displeasure at all toward you.

The conversation we exchanged was, admittedly, brief.

(Since we were in the middle of a bondage photo shoot, that's only natural.)

When you arrived at the studio, we exchanged a brief greeting. It was our first meeting.

Several hours passed, and until my bondage work was finished and you said your goodbyes and left the studio, we didn't have any real conversation.

However, even without exchanging words, you accurately observed nearly everything in my heart.

You sat on the sofa in the corner of the studio the entire time, never standing up or moving from that spot.

I casually observed your posture, the way you moved your gaze. In other words, your facial expressions, as I tied up the model and posed her.

While I went about my work, I was gauging your interest in ropes and bondage techniques, the accuracy of your understanding, and the depth of your knowledge.

Are you asking if I could really understand that much by looking at a foreigner from the outside, someone with different eye and hair colors, a different build (you're huge! You look like you weigh over 100 kilos!), and with whom I couldn't even communicate?

Well, you know, I can.

There's a kind of unspoken mystery in this unique art form, one that uses only rope, that only those within it can truly understand.

As I observed you observing me, I got the feeling, to put it in a manga speech bubble: "You're quite good at this."

That's the impression I got.

(Please forgive me if this expression offends you.)

There's a passage like this in the letter you sent me.

"...in particular, your 'Kuzushi-nawa' is truly wonderful, and I feel I learn a great deal from you about 'Kuzushi-nawa.'"

This was translated for me by A-san, who was accompanying us that day as an interpreter.

This female translator, who lives in Japan, used the new term “Kuzushi-nawa” to translate a specific passage from your original text.

“Kuzushi-nawa.”

It’s a word I’ve never seen or heard before, but I understood its meaning immediately.

It is a specialized term, no, a neologism, that others likely wouldn’t understand. This new word is not incorrect.

Her sense of Japanese and her feel for language, as demonstrated by this translation, are wonderful. It’s a perfect choice of words.

I believe that, in addition to her excellent grasp of the Japanese language, she is also a person with a deep understanding of what is commonly referred to as the “SM sensibility.”

Illustrations of various bondage techniques that I have written about in the past, accompanied by photographs and text, in numerous magazines and books.

And furthermore, manuals on bondage techniques that I have produced in the form of hundreds of video recordings.

My use of rope on this day, which broke away from those manuals, you found it wonderful, called it “Kuzushi-nawa,” and A-san translated it for us.

Having grown disgusted by seeing so many people merely imitating the forms of the bondage techniques I had created and developed in the past, without any ingenuity, creativity, emotion, or passion, and without putting their heart and soul into it, I had secretly resolved in my heart during this shoot to deliberately break away from those manuals.

And Fuyuki, the model, was a woman who responded perfectly to that “Kuzushi-nawa.”

To put it simply, in order to apply “Kuzushi-nawa” in an attractive way, the woman on the receiving end needs to have the ability to react appropriately.

That reaction must never be a shallow performance.

Unless it is a reaction that is utterly natural in both mind and body, yet conceals a fierce intensity within, the “Kuzushi-nawa” cannot be executed attractively.

No matter how roughly or violently you bind a woman who merely says things like “I love being tied up” with nothing but empty words and who lacks the inner “story” of the harshness of being bound, the true allure of “Kuzushi-nawa” will never emerge.

You praised my “Kuzushi-nawa,” saying it was truly wonderful.

And of course, I was overjoyed that you were moved by the beauty of the model, Fuyuki, and the creativity of photographer Kei.

The staff who worked as my right-hand in that studio that day were all hand-picked individuals I trust implicitly. With the same team, we’ll take on new challenges.

That said, if you had thought my “Kuzushi-nawa” was sloppy rope simply because it wasn’t tied by the book, I wouldn’t have felt that “You’re quite the talent” about you.

Every time I applied the “Kuzushi-nawa” to the model and reached those crucial points, your face flushed, your eyes sparkled, and you reacted with perfect precision.

Each time, I thought, “Ahh, this American really understands ‘rope’ on a deep level” and it put me in a good mood. It was such a sincere reaction that I even found it endearing.

“I feel like I have a lot to learn from you about ‘Kuzushi-nawa.’ If the opportunity arises, I would very much like you to teach me...” That was the message in your letter.

Understood.

If the opportunity arises, I’ll be happy to teach you as much as you’d like.

I believe that you, of all people, understand the simple yet complex significance of rope. I can speak with you with complete confidence.

However, how could a “carnivorous” race, for whom “leather” is the norm, possibly understand something that the “herbivorous” Japanese, the people who gave birth to “rope,” cannot grasp no matter how much it is explained?

It is a mystery.

It is precisely because it is a mystery that the world and life are so interesting.

Master K.

I’ll say it again. Your manners as a bondage enthusiast observing my rope techniques were impeccable.

Whenever I see people playing with rope carelessly and crudely, I feel gloomy and am sometimes overcome by a sense of despair, but your presence has given me a ray of hope.

Let's meet again.

Hey, A-san.

I'll be asking you to translate this letter into English so Master K can read it, but when I reread it, it seems quite difficult.

In addition to the subtle nuances unique to Japanese, there are expressions throughout that capture the distinctive shades of the bondage world.

I know it will be hard to translate and will take time, but please do your best to convey my feelings to him.

One last thing.

The term "kuzushi-nawa" that you translated is synonymous with what I call "shinken-nawa¹²."

¹² Earnest rope.

2010.7.17

濡木痴夢男のおしゃべり芝居 第百四十二回

Nureki Chimuo's Talking Theater Chapter 142

くずし縄と真剣縄

Loose Rope and Tight Rope

I received a phone call from Mr. N, an old acquaintance who reads this “Talking Theater” every time.

“...After seeing Nureki Sensei's bondage session, I can't stop thinking about the 'kuzushi-nawa' that Master K, an American, is said to have mentioned. Could you please explain what it is in a little more detail?”

Since Mr. N has such a passionate interest in ropes, it's only natural that he would take such an interest in the term “kuzushi-nawa” as described by Master K.

That said, it's difficult to explain “kuzushi-nawa” in concrete terms over the phone.

Or rather, it's impossible.

“The magazine will be out soon, so please take a look at that,” was all I could say.

To be honest, I don't recall specifically tying the model, Fuyuki-san, using “kuzushi-nawa” during that shoot.

To reiterate, “kuzushi-nawa” is a coined term created by Master K, or rather, by the beautiful interpreter Ms. A, who translated the English letter he gave me into Japanese and conveyed it to me.

I did not attempt to tie Fuyuki-san with the intention of using “kuzushi-nawa.”

I simply wanted to try a somewhat more realistic form of bondage, rather than the formulaic, by-the-book methods that have been repeated over the past few decades.

I just secretly referred to it in my mind as “shinken-nawa.”

I had tried to tie Fuyuki-san with “shinken-nawa” before, but the staff around us lacked a certain tension, so I couldn’t get into the right mindset.

The rope wouldn’t cooperate either.

That’s exactly right.

The rope is alive, you see.

It’s not just a mere object.

I wrote about this forty-five years ago and even used it as the title of a book.

Namely, “The Rope is Alive.”

The multicolored cover of this book was designed by Minomura Ko.

If there’s any slack in the atmosphere on set, it’s all over.

If I, the female model, and the staff, starting with the photographer, lack a sense of tension, I simply can’t bring myself to tie “serious rope.”

If even one person has a low level of understanding about SM, the atmosphere on set won’t build up.

If there is even one person around me who lacks concentration, I myself won’t get into it in the first place.

Huh? What did you say?

You think that’s obvious?

Ah, yes. You’re right.

In that regard, the atmosphere during the shoot the other day was good.

It was fitting for the appearance of “serious rope.”

Master K, who had come from America to observe, had such an excited expression and such a look of ecstasy in his eyes that it put me in the best mood.

I tied the “serious rope” with precision.

“Could you explain it a little more specifically? Hey, what kind of tying technique is ‘serious rope?’ How exactly is it different from ‘kuzushi-nawa?’” Mr. N persisted.

No, he’s just passionate about “bondage.”

“That’s why it’s impossible over the phone. If you look at the magazine, it’ll be crystal clear, you’ll understand right away.” I replied, just as the front door slammed shut with a loud bang.

A large envelope arrived in the mail from Producer Yamanouchi Yukari.

It had six 80-yen stamps on it. It was express mail.

“Hold on a sec,” I told Mr. N. I opened the envelope with scissors, and just as I’d suspected, it contained a hefty fifteen pages of the proof copy for the magazine I was discussing with Mr. N, along with the proofs for my written manuscript.

“Mr. N, I’m sorry, but I’m going to have to hang up. Let’s talk again later.” I hung up the phone.

I spread the proofs out on my desk.

What kind of bondage is this “kuzushi-nawa” that Master K and the beautiful interpreter speak of? I decided to look at it objectively.

At first glance, there doesn’t seem to be much difference.

It’s a binding method where the usual standard rope has been slightly “disheveled” or “disrupted.”

There is no particular change, but because the model’s reaction is good, that “kuzushi-nawa” comes alive.

Along with the model’s agonized breathing, the rope breathes agonizingly as well. The model and the rope are reacting intimately with one another.

No matter how much passion I pour into using “kuzushi-nawa,” if the woman on the receiving end is merely a self-proclaimed enthusiast or a model in it just for the pay, this kind of intensity simply won’t come through.

The model named Fuyuki isn’t in it for the money. Within her lies an inescapable, poignant story. The rope is a tool to bring that story to life.

And photographer Kei captures her true self, her reaction to the “kuzushi-nawa,” honestly and faithfully, without any unnecessary staging.

The lighting and the angle are both great.

Thank you, Kei. You really brought out the best in my rope work. I appreciate it.

Fuyuki-san’s confession is published alongside the photos. It’s an honest, well-written piece. Thank you so much for writing it.

In a letter to me from Producer Yamanouchi Sachi, included with the proof copy, it says, “...I received a truly precious manuscript. When you sent it to me and I read it, I was absolutely stunned.”

As I’ve written here and there before, Fuyuki-san harbors a deep, rich story within herself.

The story explodes through ropes.

Since we’re on the subject, let me state this clearly.

If a bondage model doesn’t possess a story within herself, no matter how much effort the person puts into tying her up, it will ultimately end up as nothing more than a “cruel endurance contest” or a “circus with ropes.”

Of course, whether it’s a “cruel endurance contest” or a “circus with ropes,” those who enjoy such things will likely welcome it.

However, for those who seek the most stimulating and intensely sensual pleasures of the “world of rope,” these are not particularly appealing.

There was a time when model clubs didn’t even exist.

We struggled to find women willing to model for us.

And the models we tied up and photographed almost all carried heavy stories within themselves.

The photographs we took of them, no matter how poor our technical skills might have been, radiated the dazzling light of “SM,” filled with allure.

No, let’s stop reminiscing about the past now.

Even now, there must be women deep within whose hearts harbor harrowing stories.

In a world like this, there's no way they don't exist.

In any case, this latest shoot was very fruitful.

2010.8.2

濡木痴夢男のおしゃべり芝居 第百四十三回

Nureki Chimuo's Talking Theater Chapter 143

雑草と呼ばれても

Even if They Call me a Weed

Most of the novels, plays, screenplays, essays, and illustrated stories I have written over the years under various pen names are currently housed at the Sex Industry Museum in Iidabashi, though not all of them.

It amounts to about sixty or seventy percent of my total body of work.

I have no idea where the remaining thirty or forty percent are now.

They are not in my possession either.

Of course, none of them are particularly valuable, but they are, after all, a record of my life.

I sincerely believe that what I have written is utter rubbish.

That is why I never took the trouble to carefully preserve the magazines in which they were published.

I thought that if they disappeared, so be it.

No, I thought it would be better if they vanished like weeds.

In fact, an editor from a magazine that had commissioned me once said to my face, "The weed-like manuscripts you write..."

At the time, I was naturally angry, but I also found myself thinking that maybe he was right.

Even while calling them weeds, that publisher paid me a substantial monthly fee for what I wrote.

Companies will use any weed as long as it turns a profit.

I was also hired by a video production company and worked on the set of so-called SM videos.

During a break after lunch, I gave this reply to a question from B-kun, the assistant director:

“...You see, the heroine of this piece actually loves her husband’s father more than she loves her husband. Her father-in-law realizes this and, stealing glances from his son, makes a move on the heroine... That’s where the aim of this work lies.”

I was the one who wrote the script for that drama.

Director I, who had been listening to the conversation between B and myself from the side, said to another assistant director with a mocking tone:

“Hey, a work of art, huh? You call this SM video a work? Isn’t a work of art supposed to be something with a little more class?”

When I heard that, I was furious inside.

There was clearly prejudice and contempt toward SM.

But I kept quiet and endured it.

The footage shot by that director had good sales results at the production company, and he was someone the president held in high regard.

Ever since then, I’ve avoided calling my own writing “a work of art.”

Although I was angry at Director I’s words at first, “...I see. Maybe it really isn’t something I should call a “work of art.”

I even found myself agreeing with him at times.

After experiencing similar situations several times, I had lost all attachment to what I wrote.

Of course, since it was responsible work for which I received a fee, I still gripped my pen with the determination to give it my all whenever I wrote.

I had to write with all my might. If I didn’t get the next commission, I wouldn’t be able to make a living.

However, being called “weeds” by the editor of an SM magazine and being scoffed at and despised by Director I with the words, “Can you really call this a work of art?” became a kind of trauma that remained constantly in my heart and would not leave me.

It was Nakahara Rutsu, the Director of the Sex Industry Museum, who saved my heart.

I have written about this several times before, so some of you may be thinking, “not this again,” but for my sixth book in the Kawade Bunko series, “Bondage, As Long as I Live,” Nakahara Rutsu-san kindly provided a detailed and thoughtful commentary.

She recognized what I had written as art and gave it her full endorsement.

I was deeply grateful. It was Nakahara-san’s words that saved me.

Even if it was just a weed, it was still a work of art, and at that time and in that place, it played a role that was appropriate in its own way.

I finally came to accept that there is value in that, in my own work.

Even though I could accept it, I still couldn’t muster any confidence and my inferiority complex remained as strong as ever. But in any case, I was revived by Nakahara Rutsu-san’s commentary.

Ever since I began receiving new encouragement from Nakahara-san, my writing has changed. At the very least, I stopped compromising with society and started writing what I wanted to write.

If I wrote something that pandered to the world or was sloppy due to compromise, she would immediately call me out on it, and sometimes even scold me.

At this point, I must bring Mr. Akiyoshi Otaguro into the picture.

As I mentioned earlier, about sixty to seventy percent of what I have written is housed in the Museum of Popular Culture.

Of course, I could not be more grateful.

And Mr. Akiyoshi Otaguro, a devoted reader of “Talking Theater,” is now diligently tracking down my writings that are not currently held in the Sex Industry Museum.

As I have mentioned before, I am deeply grateful to Mr. Otaguro and he has once again managed to track down new materials for me.

I am truly grateful and deeply moved.

Mr. Otaguro does not merely unearth these works. He also reads the novels I wrote with great enthusiasm and sends them to me along with his thoughts on the story.

These reflections always leave me feeling wonderful.

In short, he offers me frank praise. For a writer like me who lacks confidence, it is deeply appreciated that his praise is not mere flattery but expressed in appropriate terms.

For example, I once received a letter like this:

“...The other day, you shared some valuable stories from your time at Kubo Shoten, and you gave me copies of your own books as well as a collection by Kyosuke Nango. I really appreciate everything you’ve done for me. I started reading ‘The Ghost of the Old Castle’ the very same day, and it was so fascinating that I finished it in less than a day.

The pacing, plot, and ending were all flawless, and I thoroughly enjoyed reading it. In particular, ‘The White Wax Mansion Incident’ had a different outcome from the ‘Uramado’ version, and I could clearly see Nureki Sensei’s professional dedication in his meticulous attention to detail...”

I would do anything for readers who offer such kind words of praise.

What Mr. Otaguro sent me this time was a copy of a mystery short story titled “The Naked Woman Who Hunts Men,” which I had written under the pen name Toyokichi Iida for the monthly magazine “Detective Club.”

To my surprise, it was the November 1958 issue.

1958! That’s a magazine from over fifty years ago!

He also copied the table of contents for this issue, and flanking my pen name are Kotaro Kiki and Kazuo Shimada, both of whom are no longer with us.

Similarly, in the December 1958 issue of “Detective Club,” I wrote a novel titled “The Princess of Revenge at Snake King Castle” under the pen name Toyokichi Iida. In this same issue, I also wrote a short story titled “The Defeat of the White Snake Lady” under the pen name Ichiro Toyoda.

In other words, two of my stories were published simultaneously in a single magazine issue under different pen names.

Additionally, in the New Year's issue of "Detective Club" from 1959, I wrote a novel titled "The Ginza Female Slave Market" under the pen name Toyokichi Iida.

It seems I was writing a novel for every issue of "Detective Club" at that time, but I have completely forgotten about it.

For some reason, I don't have a single copy of this magazine in my possession.

This is precisely why, while about sixty to seventy percent of my works are housed at the Sex Industry Museum, the whereabouts of the remaining thirty to forty percent remain unknown.

For some reason, the novel I published in "Detective Club" isn't even listed in my work notes.

Mr. Otaguro also tracked this down for me. In the October 1968 (Showa 44) issue of the magazine "Suiri-kai" (The World of Inference), I wrote a detective short story titled "Don't Cry, Hitman" under the name Toyokichi Iida.

The table of contents for that issue features a long list of Edogawa Rampo Prize-winning authors, including Kyotaro Nishimura, Sen Saga, Noboru Seito, and Fumiko Shinjo.

In addition, the names of Kikuo Tsunoda, Haruhiko Oyabu, Michio Tsuzuki, and Shigeaki Tanaka also appear.

I feel honored that my name appears alongside these first-rate authors, but I can't help but wonder why it's there.

Was the editor-in-chief of "Suiri-kai" trying to pull me away from the SM world and draw me toward the world of mystery?

However, at that time, my heart was strongly drawn to the magazine edited by Minomura Ko, that is, Toshiyuki Suma.

No matter how often I was invited to "Tantei Club" or "Suiri-kai," I simply couldn't resist the allure of Uramado.

Uramado allowed me to write as many as five or six stories in the same issue, across a variety of genres, as long as I changed my pen name.

It was in 1957 (Showa 32), when I was twenty-seven, that I began writing my first serialized novel, "Breasts of Hell," for Uramado.

The illustrations for this serial were provided by Mr. Akiyoshi Ro.

With every issue, I would gaze in rapture at his meticulous character sketches and innovative compositions that brought the characters to life. I felt that the illustrations were even more captivating than the novel itself.

Mr. Otaguro always expends extraordinary energy tracking down my old works that I no longer have in my possession.

In other words, he unearths my memories associated with those old works and brings them back to me.

Thank you very much. I would like to express my gratitude once again.

As a small token of my appreciation, I deposited several worn-out, dirty old copies of Uramado, which I used for editorial work during my time at the magazine, at the Sex Industry Museum. Have you received them?

I believe I still have a few things I'd like to give you. They're mostly old, grubby books and materials, but please do accept them.

2010.8.3

濡木痴夢男のおしゃべり芝居 第百四十四回

Nureki Chimuo's Talking Theater Chapter 144

酒井妙子との接吻記念日

The Anniversary of My Kiss with Taeko Sakai

As I mentioned in my previous post, about 70 percent of the materials I wrote in the past are currently being preserved at the Sex Industry Museum.

If I include even small sidebars and articles, the total number of pieces I've written likely reaches as many as a thousand.

(After all, I've been writing for over fifty years.)

Thanks to the sincere devotion of Director Nakahara Rutsu, that 70%, which has been published in magazines and books, is carefully displayed with meticulous attention and sincere effort, ensuring it is accessible to anyone who wishes to read it.

I cannot thank her enough for this. It feels as though even weeds growing by the roadside acquire some kind of value as the years go by.

It is truly a blessing.

The Sex Industry Museum stands as a witness to the majority of my achievements, the fact that a worthless person like me has barely managed to survive.

Director Nakahara occasionally offers me words of praise, but I still cling to the belief that there can be no value in anything I've written and cannot shake this deep-seated sense of inferiority.

Then she raises her willow-like eyebrows and encourages me, even showing a hint of anger, saying "It's okay, it has its own solid value!"

And every time I summon up my courage.

No, I've already written about this several times, so I'll stop here.

My old novel, one that would never be displayed on the shelves of the Sex Industry Museum and that even my devoted reader, Mr. Otaguro, would likely overlook, actually popped out today from a paper bag in the corner of the closet while I was searching for other materials.

It suddenly popped out of a paper bag in the corner of the closet while I was doing that.

It is a fourteen page story titled “The Anniversary of My Kiss with Taeko Sakai,” which I wrote eight years ago under the pen name Toyokazu Iida for a fanzine.

Though brief, it is a piece I hold dear.

The fanzine in which it was published has been lost somewhere, and all that remained in my possession was a copy of the original manuscript.

I would like to take this opportunity to include it in this collection, “Talking Theater.”

Huh... so a man named Nureki Chimuo writes stories like this, too?

You’re probably thinking, “Just how lewd is this guy?” Some of you might be exasperated and give a wry smile. But there is no mistake in my writing.

The Anniversary of My Kiss with Taeko Sakai

If you walk along Kasuga Street from Ueno-Hirokoji toward Hongo, you’ll find a small dining spot called “Tsutakichi” on a side street near Yushima Tenjin Shrine.

A rokyoku performance was being held in a tatami room of about 24 mats on the second floor of that restaurant, and it was there that I first met Taeko Sakai. That was last summer.

Taeko was the accompanist on the shamisen for an 80 year old rokyoku singer named Tomon Juro. Though she looked to be in her late twenties, or, even if she were a bit older, perhaps just a year or two over though, she was a shamisen player with a rich, resonant tone full of emotion.

From her petite, slender frame, an indescribably, almost terrifying passion seemed to burst forth.

I don't know much about the shamisen, but I was deeply moved. After the performance, during the after-party in the second-floor tatami room, I placed a small gift in her hand.

I often go to the theater to watch plays, and I drop by a rakugo or kodan venue on my walks, but I rarely go to places where rokyoku is performed. However, if invited, I'll even make my way to a small restaurant in Yushima that I've never been to before, so I don't dislike it.

To be honest, as I was preparing the gift money to give to Taeko before the after-party, I had a premonition that I might end up meeting this shamisen player alone someday. Of course, there is a basis for this premonition, but I'll omit the details here as it would take too long to explain. To dream of being alone with her just because I gave her a gift, without any real basis for it, would make me nothing more than a lecherous old man. No, I suppose there's no helping it if I'm called a lecherous old man. I am a man who will turn seventy-two this year.

While I had the expectation that we might meet, I also felt that I would likely never have another chance to see her. A rokyoku accompanist, that is, a shamisen player, rarely shows her face in front of the audience. She is, so to speak, a performer in the shadows. Naturally, the premonition that I would never see her again was stronger. In this world, almost everything is a once in a lifetime encounter.

However, the fantasy of talking about the art of a performance alone with a young female performer is enjoyable. The fantasy alone is enough to bring me joy. I have a longing for the world of the arts. My desire for sex has not waned either. The 5000 yen gift I gave her was payment for this fantasy.

The way I'm writing this might make it seem, from the setting to the characters to the situations, as if it were a novel set in the Taisho era or the early Showa era. In fact, I thought the same thing myself, and as I was writing, I found it so funny that I ended up laughing to myself. However, this is unmistakably a modern-day story.

Even in today's world, where even elementary school students have phones with pictures, photos, and text, and everyone and their dog is glued to their computers, a world like this still exists. Or rather, it might be more accurate to say that it hasn't disappeared yet.

About a year had passed since that encounter with Taeko, and on Saturday, May 11 of this year, 2002 (come to think of it, the cherry blossoms bloomed unusually early this year, and the Golden Week holiday stretch lasted as long as ten days in some places), I accepted an invitation from a young rakugo performer named Takinogawa Koyata and went once again to a rakugo performance held on the second floor of "Tsutakichi," behind the Yushima Tenjin Shrine.

Here, I'd like to share a little about myself. As a hobby, I occasionally write scripts for performers at traditional comedy theaters. I call it a hobby because I do this kind of work for free. That's how I've come to know the performers, and they sometimes invite me to their shows. And before I knew it, they started calling me Sensei, the teacher who writes their scripts.

That day, the piece Koyota performed was a new sentimental story I had written, so naturally, I had to go and listen.

The headliner was Baikatei Enji, a veteran born in the Taisho era. However, Taeko Sakai appeared as the shamisen accompanist for Enshi, the oldest performer on stage. It was a

surprise. It must be recognized within the industry that, though Taeko is young, her skills are undeniable.

That evening, I was sitting on a cushion in the audience, in the second row from the front, toward the left side of the stage. I happened to sit there because it was empty, but from this position, with the ballad singer in the middle, I found myself facing the shamisen player.

I wondered if Taeko remembered my face. I figured she probably didn't.

I was the customer who, a year ago, had suddenly handed her an envelope containing a gift, exchanged a word or two of appreciation, and then simply vanished. I never write my address on the gift envelope.

I simply write "To Taeko Sakai," and add a small line next to it saying, "That was a splendid performance of 'O-Satsuma.' I was very impressed," and note "Meguro, Iida" in the lower left corner.

"O-Satsuma" is a unique melody used in Nagauta. It is rarely performed on the shamisen in Rakugo.

I hadn't seen her since that day. It was only natural that she would have forgotten my face.

But she remembered me. I knew it immediately from the way she stared at me while holding her shamisen on the stage's right side and gripping the plectrum in her right hand. With eyes that were strong and intense, yet somehow moist and lustrous, she was clearly sending some

kind of emotion to my heart. Without thinking, I found myself nodding, as if to say, "Yes, I understand."

She began to play the shamisen, and Enji began to sing. It was "The White Thread of the Waterfall," based on the original story by Izumi Kyoka. Enji's vocal inflections were delivered in a rich, weathered voice befitting his age, narrating this Meiji-era tale of tragic love with the artistry of a master, while Taeko's shamisen shone with a youthful, resonant tone.

The sound during the "Sawari" section echoed throughout the twenty-four tatami mat room, like the sobs of the ill-fated female performer, Shiraito of the Waterfall. Even to my untrained ear, it was clear that she had improved over the course of the year.

Occasionally, she played with a trembling, almost trance-like, exquisite rhythm and melody, and in that moment, her petite body glowed, radiating an intense eroticism.

I was overcome by an impulse to rush onto the stage, push her down, and take her.

I write this knowing I'll be laughed at as a conceited man, but her passionate performance felt as though she were aware of me and playing just for my ears. She was seducing me with sound.

There were thirty people in the audience that night, but it seemed to me that half of the enthusiastic applause at the end was directed at the accompanying shamisen.

At the after party that night, I gave Taeko another gift when she approached me. Then, I whispered, "If you don't have anything else to do, have a drink with me tonight."

She nodded with her eyes. She would definitely come with me. I was confident of it.

An hour later, Taeko and I were at Ryukodo, a recently popular Chinese a la carte restaurant located on a backstreet off Ueno Hirokoji. The lighting was deliberately dimmed, giving it the feel of a cave.

I sat down next to Taeko. On stage, she naturally wore a kimono and obi, but in private, she was dressed in a blouse and pants. I sat to her left. The stools at this restaurant, which catered to young people, were designed so that when two people sat side by side, their bodies would press close together. We drank Chinese liquor together, and I took her left wrist and said:

“What delicate hands you have. Do you really hold and play that huge shamisen with hands this slender?”

Her fingers were so supple and slender that one might think they lacked bones. As I stroked each finger as if caressing them, “It’s amazing that such powerful, emotionally charged sounds can come from these slender fingers.”

I marveled once again. It was a genuine feeling. She offered no resistance at all. She simply let me do as I pleased.

I wrapped my right arm around her right shoulder and checked the thickness of her right arm by feeling the flesh on her shoulder.

"You hardly have any muscle at all. It's amazing you can produce sound with this." I said the same thing again. I couldn't help but say it. I then used my right hand to check the flesh of her thighs. Over her black panties, of course. I pressed down with my fingers and caressed her left and right thighs as if kneading them.

She didn't try to escape. She brought her knees together slightly and pressed them firmly against my right knee.

I knew of the loneliness in her heart. Over the past year, bits and pieces of her personal circumstances had gradually reached my ears. It wasn't that I'd actively sought them out, but when you're writing scripts for young performers, such rumors naturally come to your attention. To me, each and every rumor seemed to be connected to her artistic talent.

She was married. Her husband, they said, was a man of poor character who didn't work.

"He's a terrible man, that guy. Half of Taeko's misfortune is that man's fault," a young man in the know told me. And this isn't a rumor. It's something I've known from the start, having seen it with my own eyes. She has a bad left leg. In other words, she limps. It wasn't particularly noticeable, but if you paid close attention, there was a distinct quirk in her gait. For a woman, this was a source of deep insecurity. I thought that this sense of inferiority was likely the driving force behind her shamisen playing.

It's not just that her technique is superb. Her tone is imbued with a fiery spirit that borders on resentment. The first time I heard her, I was shaken to the core and utterly captivated by the eerie, dark resonance of passion lurking beneath the shamisen's brilliant melody.

It wasn't just the sound of the shamisen. That dark passion gushed forth from her entire body, radiating light and captivating me with its intense eroticism.

Inside the cave, while drinking Chinese liquor, Taeko and I talked. Taeko said she wanted to perform rakugo herself. She said she wanted to do not just the shamisen, but the storytelling as well. She said she had written the script for it herself and that it was already finished.

From the way she spoke, I realized this woman knew quite a bit about me. She was an enigmatic figure, but she must have heard from someone that I was a writer who penned scripts. Just as rumors about her had reached my ears, various rumors had reached hers as well. And in fact, I had factored that into my plan. This was precisely what confirmed my hunch that if I invited her, she would surely come along.

"I want to tell the story of a woman who falls in love with a man, becomes utterly obsessed with him, and chases after him to the very end, no matter what," she said.

"Are you going to perform it as a singer-songwriter? That's going to be tough."

She explained that she would play the shamisen herself while simultaneously handling both the narration and the singing. It is a performance style that only a highly skilled artist could pull off.

"But you see, Sensei, now that I've taken the plunge into the world of rokyoku, if I don't go all the way, I won't be able to convey my feelings," Taeko said. The expression "to convey my feelings" delighted me.

I asked her a few questions about the script she had written. She gave quick, intelligent answers. Realizing she was quite the literary young woman, I was moved. (Could such an intellectual woman really exist in the world of Naniwabushi, a genre often looked down upon as a representative of vulgar popular entertainment that peddles sentimentality and duty?)

She was well-versed in both domestic and foreign literature, having even read novels by Latin American authors. There was a sharp insight in every word she spoke, and she possessed a unique critical acumen that wasn't merely borrowed, which delighted me once again.

At some point, when the conversation turned to sex between men and women, a bold yet witty expression, typical of a married woman, came out of her mouth.

She and I burst out laughing. The moment was ripe. I grabbed her small head with one hand, turned her face toward mine, and kissed her.

When I sucked hard, I smelled the scent of a shamisen. A shamisen couldn't possibly have a scent, nor could it possibly emanate from a woman's mouth, yet I sensed the scent of a shamisen. Or perhaps it was the scent of the shamisen's skin. At that moment, her tongue slipped into my mouth. It was a delicate, tiny tongue. Inside my mouth, that piece of flesh swelled into a firm mass. I sucked as hard as I could, and her tongue swelled even hotter.

"It's suffocating, I can't breathe," she said, shaking her head.

This happened on the night of Saturday, May 11, 2002. It was the anniversary of my first kiss with Taeko Sakai. As we left "Tsutakichi," the venue for the Rakugo performance, I thought to myself, "Let's just stick to kissing tonight. Let's keep it to just kissing and see how things go

from there.” So that night, it was just a kiss. That was my calculation as a man, but she, too, must have had her own calculations in mind when she accepted my invitation. I know very well that women like this are actually the most dangerous. After all, I am a man who has lived for seventy two years.

(二〇〇二年五月十二日)

(May 12, 2002)

2010.8.4

濡木痴夢男のおしゃべり芝居 第百四十五回

Nureki Chimuo's Talking Theater Chapter 145

正体不明のおじさん

The Mysterious Old Man

This is a real mess.

I'm going to be the instructor for a theater workshop.

I'll be speaking as an instructor in front of people who are studying to become actors or actresses, as well as men and women who are already working in the theater.

What's more, this request comes from a very reputable, official organization in the field.

Since I'm really not cut out for this, I was about to turn it down when the draft flyer for the workshop was completed. When I read it, I found the text introducing me to be quite interesting.

It was written by Mr. T, a director whom I deeply respect.

So, I changed my mind.

I reread the flyer several times, and thought, "Maybe I'll give it a try, just for fun."

I decided to do a stand-up comedy routine instead of a workshop.

I could transcribe the entire flyer here, but if I accidentally mention any proper names, who knows what kind of trouble might arise these days.

So, I'll replace proper names and other details with "xxxx."

As I've repeatedly mentioned in this "Talking Theater," I'm a rather shady character, so I might end up causing trouble for someone.

I know a few people who, fearing that others might recognize them as my acquaintances and wary of being seen with me, always walk at least five meters away when accompanying me.

Even though, in the ordinary world, nobody knows my face.

So, although it's a bit of a hassle, I'll go ahead and explain it after blurring out the details.

Now, here's the text of the flyer.

“Special Lecture: Exploring the Underground Currents of Japanese Theater”

That is the theme of the lecture. Next, in particularly large letters, it reads, “Mr. xxxx Tells All!”

xxxx is my other stage name.

I should have mentioned in the “Profile” at the beginning of this “Talking Theater” that I have numerous pen names.

By numerous, I mean over a dozen, close to twenty. For a single person to have so many aliases, even if there were reasons and necessities for them, is, in and of itself, hardly something one could call normal.

It gives the impression of a shady character.

About fifty years ago, during the height of the “Campaign to Ban Obscene Books,” I was summoned to the Metropolitan Police Department.

I was told, “Why do you use so many names? A person who uses so many names must surely be a shady, bad sort.”

[Kurama Tengu](#) sometimes goes by the name Kurata Tensan, but that is his only pseudonym.

A good person who benefits society would never have a dozen or so aliases.

Since I have to use placeholders like “xxxx” even in “Talking Theater,” I suppose I really am a bad person after all.

You might be thinking, “Why not just be honest and use your real name, Nureki Chimuo?” But if I did that, I'd have to deal with all sorts of troublesome complications and stress.

It seems that the work of Nureki Chimuo does appear quite bizarre, lewd, and unusual to ordinary people. If I tell them I know him, they immediately start looking at me through the lens of curiosity.

I want to avoid causing trouble for others as much as possible.

Next, the text on the flyer,

“...Regular member of the xxxx Theater Company, xxxx (my name), plays such roles as,

‘A character whose neck is tightened by a rope thrown from the stage, crawling up from the audience’

‘A homeless person who’s too realistic’

‘A suspicious cult leader’

‘A fortune-teller’

‘A king forced to eat a poisoned apple by his wife and daughter’

And more, a renowned actor who exudes a unique charisma that you won’t forget once you’ve seen him.

In fact, he was involved in comfort theater during the war, and after the war, he dabbled in everything from kabuki to underground theater. He’s also worked as a street tout in the Asakusa area, and is well-versed in popular performing arts such as live film narration, kamishibai, and street theater. He’s even researched the history of theater dating back to the late Edo period. But his true identity? No one knows.

We’ve created an opportunity to hear valuable stories unique to this man, who has walked the underground currents of modern theater, stories you won’t find in the ‘History of Theater’ taught in official textbooks.

If you’re interested, please join us.

The event runs for two hours, from 7PM to 9PM.

The participation fee is 500 yen...”

Well, that’s all there is to the flyer’s tagline.

Whether officially or unofficially, I have absolutely no qualifications or knowledge to lecture on theater history in front of an audience, so I’ll spend at least thirty minutes of the two-hour show performing the tachi-e “The Well Known Suzukamori” as thoroughly as possible. (I have a little confidence in this. This alone is worth the 500 yen.) I’ll kill time with that, and for the rest, I’ll come up with a plan to fudge my way through by entertainingly recounting anecdotes from the immediate postwar era, when I was an actor with the xxxx theater company and was taken in by traveling troupes performing “Don Quixote” and “Treasure Island,” touring all over Japan.

Immediate postwar refers to Showa 21, or 1946.

Since this happened seventy years ago, most details have faded from memory, so I don't have to worry about being found out no matter what nonsense I spout or how big a tall tale I tell (ah, I really am a shady character).

The reason I came up with this idea was that last night, while listening to NHK's late-night radio program "Midnight Express," I heard [Ai Sasaki](#) of the Bunka-za theater company on the show, talking about her troupe during and after the war. In a nutshell, she is an actress who was born and raised in the theater world.

I was surprised when, at the end of the radio segment, Ai Sasaki said, "I've turned sixty-seven myself."

Wow, that demure young beauty, Ai Sakai, is that old now?!

I've seen Ai's mother, Mitsue Suzuki, perform on stage.

My mother and Mitsue Suzuki were childhood friends.

Even before Mitsue Suzuki joined Masao Inoue's Inoue Theater Dojo, and even after she became an actress, my mother remembered her well and would sometimes speak of her to me with pride.

No, now is not the time to write about such things.

However, the story of Ai Sasaki's pure and noble life in the theater troupe after the war moved me, an eighty year old man.

In comparison (though there's really no need to compare), my life immediately after the war was one of low aspirations, poverty, and a day-to-day existence spent wallowing in the murky sludge of vulgarity.

I've digressed, so let me return to the text of the original flyer.

In my brief biography, it states, "...I used to solicit customers around Asakusa..."

"Of course!" I thought.

When introduced as hustling for customers around Asakusa, it brings to mind the figure of Heikichi Yoshimura (we called him "Hei-san"), the Asakusa connoisseur who passed away a few years ago.

In other words, I was a hustler who guided men to the nightclubs.

The kind of hustling I did was somewhat different from that. No, quite different.

It was an extremely simple job. It involved standing in front of a traditional comedy theater and loudly calling out to passersby to invite them in.

In other words, it was a form of touting aimed at attracting passersby who enjoyed traditional performing arts to come in and enjoy the shows.

Unfortunately, I have no experience as a stylish, alluring tout like Taira-san. However, “wait a minute,” I thought. That line on this flyer, “working as a hustler in Asakusa...” is spot on. In a different sense, hasn’t Nureki Chimuo’s work up until now been exactly that? “Hustling?”

A life as a hustler.

Taira-san’s work as a hustler in the world of chic allure is something anyone can understand and accept, and is sometimes even treated as a badge of honor. But the kind of hustling I’ve been doing is obscure. It’s a specialized form of hustling that ordinary people simply cannot comprehend.

It’s the sort of thing I can’t explain even if I tried, and I can’t carelessly speak of it. If I’m not careful, I’ll be terribly misunderstood. I want to avoid being misunderstood.

Since I cannot speak of it carelessly, I end up being nothing more than a mysterious old man.

“Mysterious old man.”

Well, I suppose that’s the perfect name for me.

2010.8.5

濡木痴夢男のおしゃべり芝居 第百四十六回

Nureki Chimuo's Talking Theater Chapter 146

美濃村晃のやさしさ

Minomura Ko's Kindness

I just can't seem to write it.

I can't write the very first line.

It's not that I'm being lazy.

I may be incredibly fickle, but I don't think I'm lazy by nature.

I've never missed a deadline when asked to write a manuscript.

But this time, I'm at a loss as to where and how to begin.

I'm confused about my stance and attitude when I start writing.

I've calculated that once this manuscript is complete, it will likely amount to around 600 sheets of 400-character manuscript paper.

In other words, I intend to wrap it up neatly within that page count.

(Of course, I won't know for sure until I actually start writing.)

Why can't I write?

There is simply too much I must write about.

I became far too deeply involved with him.

I mustn't ramble on.

I must portray Minomura Ko effectively and vividly. That is my duty. Not a single word or phrase can be wasted.

That being the case, the moment I begin writing is, after all, the hardest part.

I must establish my mindset regarding Minomura Ko's art with an unwavering, clear stance.

Thinking only of that, I have spent the past few months constantly keeping my resolve to write strong, day and night.

For example, rehearsals for a new play by the theater company I belong to began a few days ago.

I cannot skip that play, I absolutely must participate.

With the new script before us, nearly twenty people are gathered in a single room.

As we read the script aloud, in the back of my mind, I am thinking about the opening line of "The World of Minomura Ko."

The opening line. The opening line.

It never leaves my head.

Suddenly, a specific line, and the few lines that follow it, will come to mind.

But when it comes down to it, I can't write it down.

I'm starting to feel a slight sense of anxiety.

Yesterday, I went to the Sex Industry Museum in Iidabashi to see the "[Akiyoshi Ran: Phantoms of the Land of Pleasure Exhibition](#)." The subtitle of this exhibition is "The Unknown World of Akiyoshi Ran." Of course, this, too, is closely related to "The World of Minomura Ko."

After that, I saw the American film "Salt" at Piccadilly 1 in Yurakucho.

Since it was a film with good buzz, I was worried it might be sold out, but about a quarter of the seats were empty.

With my legs stretched out and my body half-reclined, I was able to comfortably admire close-up shots of Angelina Jolie's face.

(It was a stark contrast to the auditoriums of the traveling theater troupe I visit once or twice a month, or sometimes two or three times, which are always packed to the brim with feverish people whose body odors swirl in the air.)

I discovered that if I apply slightly heavy makeup to Director Nakahara of the Sex Industry Museum, she ends up looking just like Angelina Jolie.

If I were to say something like this to her, she would instantly raise her willow-shaped eyebrows in indignation and say “Huh? What do you mean by that? In what way do I look like her?!”

So I can’t bring myself to say it out loud.

“Salt” was a spy movie with a bad aftertaste, full of deceiving, being deceived, deceiving again, and being deceived once more.

Of course, deceiving and being deceived is undoubtedly a form of pleasure, and since many dramas are built on that, I don’t dislike it.

However, when it’s done this thoroughly and realistically with such clever direction, it makes me think, “What a repulsive creature the human being is.”

It makes me think, “What a despicable country America is.”

And I find myself feeling, in a way that’s quite unlike my usual self, that, yes, human beings really do have to trust one another.

The female spy played by Angelina Jolie is in love with her husband, an entomologist who keeps venomous spiders, and that scene is the only one that feels a bit heartwarming. The rest is a relentless succession of cold-blooded, brutal scenes.

The heavy, realistic sounds of the gunfights are also unsettling. They resonate deep in my gut.

Anyone who finds pleasure in those intimidating sounds must be sick.

That’s it. At the tach-e event coming up at the Yokohama History Museum, I’m going to bang on a drum made from a round, empty cookie tin covered in black paper.

Rather than those realistic “thud, boom!” sounds, the cheap “thump, thump, thump, thump, thump” of a tin and paper drum is what soothes the soul.

Even while watching “Salt,” I was thinking in the back of my mind about the opening lines for “The World of Minomura Ko.”

When the end credits appeared on the screen and the theater lights came up, I decided I would write “The World of Minomura Ko,” filled to the brim with love and kindness.

Actually, I don't really like the expression "love" or the word itself.

Once you say "love," human emotions, actions, interactions, absolutely everything, can be explained away with "love."

When someone says, "This is love, too," or "That's love, too," I feel as though I've somehow been convinced, and the person who said it feels satisfied as well, resolving the matter in a superficial way.

(I don't think I've used the word "love" at all in this "Talking Theater." I've been consciously avoiding it.)

It was quite some time ago, but there was a scholar named T.T. who published many books under the banner of "sexology."

I heard the following words come from T.T.'s own mouth: "Reiko Kita is a man, and this man draws nothing but sadistic illustrations of women being tormented. This is because he has a past of being betrayed by women, and out of such intense hatred for them, he draws nothing but pictures of women being bound."

T.T. has written similar explanatory notes in his own books as well.

(Needless to say, Reiko Kita is none other than Minomura Ko.)

Such popular misconceptions are still circulating in society today.

In this upcoming volume, "The World of Minomura Ko," I must correct this error.

After watching the American film "Salt," I found myself thinking...

I made up my mind.

"Love" is an ambiguous word, but it is, after all, a good one.

It brings peace to the human heart.

I decided to write the text for "The World of Minomura Ko" with "love" as its underlying current.

How Minomura Ko loved humanity, loved women, and honestly loved the desires of his own imagination.

He was a gentle man.

He was truly a man with a gentle heart.

He was kind to every woman, without discrimination, and possessed great tolerance.

Why did that gentle man take such pleasure in painting pictures of women bound and tormented?

If we simply interpret it as him, like that self-proclaimed sexologist, painting nothing but images of punishment out of hatred after being betrayed by a woman, the story becomes quite simple.

Far from being betrayed by women, I know of no other man who was as loved and adored by women as Minomura Ko. A man that gentle could never have been hated by women.

It was precisely because he was so gentle that he could draw female bodies with such delicate and beautiful lines. Far from being a sadist, when I watched him closely, he sometimes seemed like a slave serving a queen.

His gentleness was so extreme, that watching him from nearby, I grew angry and, unable to contain myself, once complained to him.

“Suma-san (Minomura Ko’s real name), you can’t do that. You’re being way too kind to a woman like that. She’s not the kind of woman who deserves your kindness. If you’re that nice, she’ll just take advantage of you.”

That’s right, I’ll paint that very kindness.

Leaving the Marunouchi Piccadilly, I slowly took the escalator from the ninth floor down to the first, and as I headed toward Yurakucho Station, I made that decision last night.

Because “Salt” was such a cold, deceitful movie, it actually stimulated me.

I will dig deep, deep into the “love” hidden in Minomura Ko’s art and make that my theme.

That is the only way.

Feeling as if I were clinging to something, I walked along thinking of nothing else.

I sat down at my desk with my posture straight and, as I wrote the first line, resolved to tackle this with all my seriousness this time.

2010.10.29

濡木痴夢男のおしゃべり芝居 第百四十七回

Nureki Chimuo's Talking Theater Chapter 147

大田黒さんへのご返事

Reply to Otaguro-san

Mr. Akiyoshi Otaguro.

I am very sorry for the delay in replying to thank you for sending me yet another package containing so many valuable materials.

Thank you very much. I have indeed received it.

Everyone is busy these days, and while saying I was busy is hardly an excuse at this point, I have simply had one thing after another to attend over the past few weeks.

(As a result, I've fallen significantly behind on writing "The Story of Minomura Ko" (working title) for the publisher who commissioned it last year. After receiving a reminder, I've only just started writing a few days ago.)

Unusually for me, I've also had many requests from public institutions (I accepted these because they happened to align with my art), and they were all tasks that required me to appear in front of large crowds. It was for one of these events that I invited you, Mr. Otaguro.

It was a gathering themed "Tachi-e Theater and My Experiences in Theater." Thank you for coming from so far away. Thanks to you, it was a great success.

I think he must have been surprised to see me working so hard at something so unlike my usual self.

But that, in its own way, is firmly connected to the way I live my life.

Anyway, I must respond to what you proposed this time. I apologize once again for the delay in my reply.

To create the kind of lively, engaging gathering you envision, I recommend starting by producing a newsletter, or even a simple magazine, that reflects the event's theme to help promote it.

In doing so, I must honestly convey all of your passion and everything you want to do. This may be difficult, but I believe that unless we go through this process, we cannot create a truly enjoyable event.

First, unless I am honest and open about myself, no matter how impressive the bylaws may be or how much we mention my name or that of Nakahara Rutsu, we won't attract genuinely good people.

First, create something like a fanzine or a personal magazine. Publish a sincere essay expressing your feelings at the beginning of the issue, list the bylaws that reflect your ideals, and recruit members. I believe that if you do this, serious, good people will surely join.

I have received quite a variety of materials from you so far, but in the end, I still don't understand a single concrete thing about what you truly like.

(Though part of it may be because I'm not very bright.)

The only thing I can barely grasp is that you like old printed materials with a somewhat unconventional flavor, but "old printed materials" covers such a broad range that, to be honest, I have no idea where to start.

Even saying "a somewhat unconventional flavor" is still rather vague. I can't quite pinpoint what you're getting at.

Is there really anyone who can derive pleasure simply from having the names of old writers and famous people laid out before them?

(I do have a slight feeling that there might be. After all, human nature is unfathomable.)

Due to the nature of my work, I have interacted with many people who are referred to as enthusiasts.

I have exchanged countless letters with such people.

There are also countless others whom I have actually met and spoken with.

Everyone wrote and spoke to me honestly, detailing their interests in great, specific detail. A sense of trust naturally develops.

Among the women who have worked with me (that is, models), there were also true enthusiasts who confided in me about shameful desires they couldn't tell others, or unusual sexual preferences.

I've written about them in detail in my book, "Real Accounts: Bondage and Punishment," published by Kawade Bunko. If you haven't read it yet, I'd be happy to give you a copy. Please don't hesitate to ask.

In the bylaws of the association you're advocating for, my name appears as "Lifetime Honorary President." I'm not sure whether to feel flattered or amused. The word "lifetime" made me laugh involuntarily. After all, I'm approaching the age where "lifetime" might actually apply.

If I don't fully understand the mindset and preference of the representative (that is, you) of the proposed association, I simply cannot accept this role.

Just as I had finished writing this much, I received a call from Director Nakahara of the Sex Industry Museum.

"I've managed to get my hands on three old issues of 'Kitan Club.' They're issues we don't have in our collection, and they're even older than the ones we do have. For now, I'll send you just the covers."

And sure enough, the covers of those three issues were faxed over immediately.

"Kitan Club" Special Issue: A Collection of Competing Masterpieces.
Published January 5, 1949 (Issue No. 10)

"Kitan Club" Collection of Rare Tales and Curiosities. Published
February 25, 1949

"Kitan Club" A Journey to the Seventh Heaven. Published April 10,
1949.¹³

These three volumes. And believe it or not, Minomura Ko drew the cover art for all three of them when he was just 27 years old. Amazing!

As mentioned earlier, I am currently writing "The Story of Minomura Ko" (working title) at the request of Kawade Shobo Shinsha, and this is a co-authored work with Nakahara Rutsu.

¹³ These do not appear in the Nawa-Art archive.

I cannot even count how many times Director Nakahara and I have discussed the vast scope of Minomura Ko's work and its true nature during his lifetime. In total, we have spent over 100 hours just talking about Minomura Ko.

Of course, the fax I received contained only the covers of all three books.

"Come over here right away and take a look inside. There are all sorts of interesting discoveries. Even from this era of 1949, the pages are already brimming with the essence of Minomura Sensei," said Director Nakahara, his voice full of excitement.

"I'd love to go, but I'm currently writing the monthly serialized manuscript for Web Sniper. Today is the deadline. I'll go as soon as I finish this," I replied, my voice just as excited as Director Nakahara's.

However, Director Nakahara's determination is incredible. I can't help but be in awe.

She managed to track down three copies of the early "Kitan Club," a flimsy little magazine of just over fifty pages published sixty years ago.

At that time, "Kitan Club" was a regional magazine sold only in Osaka and its immediate vicinity. It was a publication that people in Tokyo had never even seen.

The sharpness and certainty of Director Nakahara's intuition, as he unfolds this thin, cheap paper magazine, born from the ashes of a town scorched by the U.S. Air Force's indiscriminate bombing, and detects the scent of Minomura Ko.

Mr. Otaguro, you have been enthusiastically collecting many old magazines dating back to before the war. Which writers or artists, and what specific aspects of their work, do you focus on?

What are you seeking from these old printed materials?

I can clearly see that you are striving to discover something, and I find that very admirable, but your focus seems far too blurred, and that makes me feel uneasy.

As I was looking once again at the cover of "Kitan Club," published in 1949, which Director Nakahara just sent me via fax, I made a startling discovery. I found an error so significant that I will have to make major revisions to a section of "The Story of Minomura Ko," which I had already written and submitted to the publisher. Director Nakahara, as always, thank you. Thanks to you, I was spared from making a major mistake while writing "The Story of Minomura Ko."

2010.11.12

濡木痴夢男のおしゃべり芝居 第百四十八回

Nureki Chimuo's Talking Theater Chapter 148

名曲喫茶がまだあった

There Were Still Classic Music Cafes

While I was writing this “Talking Theater” piece last time, I received a call from Director Nakahara, who told me she had obtained some back issues of “Kitan Club.”

These were three issues, published on January 5, February 25, and April 10, 1949, and she said she would send me copies of the covers for now so I could take a look.

The copies were faxed over immediately.

For me, currently writing “The Story of Minomura Ko” (working title) series at the request of Kawade Shobo Shinsha, this was such wonderful news that I felt like jumping for joy.

That is where I left off last time.

Then yesterday, I received word that they had obtained a copy of “Kitan Club” even older than those three issues. I immediately went to the Sex Industry Museum in Iidabashi.

“I want to see issues of ‘Kitan Club’ from before Minomura Ko was put in charge of its editing.”

I had been discussing this with Director Nakahara for some time.

In other words, I wanted to confirm exactly what kind of underground magazine “Kitan Club” was before Minomura Ko joined the team.

The upcoming “The Story of Minomura Ko” series is a co-authored work by Nureki Chimuo and Nakahara Rutsu. And Nakahara Rutsu’s role in this is significant.

Director Nakahara had always said that while it was natural for him to keep the materials on hand as the author, at the same time, the Sex Industry Museum must also acquire them as part of its collection.

No, more than anything else, I want to see “Kitan Club” before Minomura Ko joined it. Engaging with “Kitan Club” prior to Minomura Ko’s involvement will reveal the true nature of Yoshida Minoru, the publisher and editor-in-chief, who has remained largely hidden in Minomura Ko’s shadow until now.

What kind of relationship of trust bound Minomura Ko and Yoshida Minoru together, allowing them to bring this magazine of perverse sexuality to full bloom?

To my eyes, it was truly a magnificent, scandalous flower that bloomed like a dream.

Director Nakahara and I would often talk about how interesting it would be to see what “Kitan Club” was like before it became so steeped in that air of heresy.

If we consider the young Minomura Ko, who had just returned from the military in 1947, to be a rough gemstone, then Yoshida Minoru wiped away the dirt clinging to that stone and polished it into a jewel.

Even when he polished it, he didn't give all sorts of instructions with mere words. Nor did he teach him.

Believing that this rough stone would surely begin to shine and sparkle on its own if left alone, Yoshida Minoru simply watched in silence. Watching in silence was undoubtedly the best way to make this rough stone shine.

And that is exactly what happened.

Oh, wait. Somehow, the conversation has strayed off course.

Upon receiving word from Director Nakahara that he had acquired an even older issue of “Kitan Club,” I went to the Sex Industry Museum.

Sure enough, there it was. There was a thin, flimsy magazine, made of poor quality senka paper, dating back some sixty-odd years. Right after the war.

It was precisely because it was so thin that I was moved. No matter how thin the magazine, no matter how faint the print, there is something heavy within it that resonates deeply in the heart.

Will the e-books being published today evoke this kind of emotion when, sixty-odd years from now, I pick one up out of necessity? Such emotion won't be needed. We'll likely be living in an era where functionality and convenience are valued over emotion.

Published March 20, 1948 (No. 5)¹⁴

¹⁴ Number 5 appears in the Nawa-Art Archive, I believe

Published May 20, 1948 (No. 7)

Published October 15, 1948

These three volumes are the back issues of “Kitan Club” that Director Nakahara has recently acquired.

The paper used over sixty years ago, during the postwar period when material resources were most scarce, has naturally deteriorated and discolored.

Director Nakahara, who has been watching my hands from nearby, craned her slender neck and immediately spoke up in a strong voice.

“When turning the pages, be very gentle! Be careful! Do it carefully and slowly!”

“Yes, I understand!”

I found myself responding like an elementary school student. But I was immediately drawn back into the pages of the tea-brown paper.

“Hmm, this is interesting. Amazing. I have to write more about the beginning of ‘The Story of Minomura Ko.’ I can’t let this slip through the cracks!”

Yoshida Minoru’s face floats before my eyes.

I’ve met Yoshida Minoru a few times myself.

I went to visit Akebono Shobo at 30 Sugawara-dori 4-chome, Sakai City, dressed up like a writer in a kimono and wearing geta just for the occasion.

Yoshida Minoru was a gentle, petite gentleman. Beneath this gentle smile, I could sense a glint of intelligence and backbone. I was twenty-four at the time.

We once sat across from each other for two hours, chatting in a coffee shop in Kagurazaka, near what is now the Sex Industry Museum. At the time, I was the editor-in-chief of Uramado.

When I came across the colophon of the 1948 issue of “Kitan Club,” Yoshida Minoru’s figure floated gently before my eyes. And he never left.

That’s right.

It was Yoshida Minoru, not Minomura Ko, who treated me with consistent sincerity from the moment I became a contributor to “Kitan Club” starting with the November 1953 issue, and who faithfully sent my manuscript fees via the post office. Perhaps I need to write more about Yoshida Minoru.

But would the editorial department at Kawade Shobo allow me to write about “Kitan Club” before Minomura Ko appeared on the scene?

Kawade Shobo has asked me to write about Minomura Ko and his work.

No, it doesn't matter if they don't allow it. If they tell me not to, I can just cut that part out later. I decided to write it anyway. I simply cannot help but write it.

An hour later, I was sitting across from Rakka-san at “Shirajuji,” a coffee shop near Suidobashi Station. I ordered curry rice and hot coffee, while Rakka-san ordered a sandwich and iced coffee.

As Rakka-san and I walked from JR Suidobashi Station toward Jumbocho, that “classic music coffee shop” remained just as it had been in the past, preserved as if by a miracle.

“I used to come into this place quite a lot, decades ago,” I muttered.

“I want to go in, I want to go into this place,” Rakka-san said, acting like a spoiled child.

I've met Mineko Tsuzuki here. I've met Ayako Nakagawa. I've met Akio Ebuchi. I met Takashige Morishita and Tetsuro Ama. I met Koji Nakata. I met Kiriko Eda. And I also met A-ko, B-ko, and C-ko. The Tokyo Sanshisha building was nearby. After finishing a shoot for “SM Select” in a studio on the fifth floor of that building, I'd come back and have coffee at this shop with a few of the models.

That's right, I also wrote several drafts of “Shooting Companion: Various Models” at a table in this shop.

That was forty years ago. The young, fresh-faced models from back then must all be around sixty now. It's terrifying.

No matter how good or bad our deeds, whether we're happy or not, people age and die equally.

I'm currently taking an elixir of eternal youth. My hair has turned jet-black, grown thicker and longer, and for some reason, my breasts have gotten bigger. They've taken on the shape of a young girl's budding breasts. I think it's because of the elixir of eternal youth.

The interior of the “Meikyoku Kissa” is a subdued, dark brown, just like the pages of the 1948 issue of “Kitan Club,” and there are no other customers in sight.

The heating is working well. The shop is quiet and warm, and as I chatted with Rakka-san, I took off my jacket, and, without thinking, slipped my left hand under the hem of my shirt and began to fondle my own breasts with my fingers. Lately, I’ve gotten into the habit of doing things like this.

I opened the collar of my shirt, grabbed that breast with my right hand, and showed it to Rakka-san.

“Eek!” Rakka-san cried out, twisting her upper body and leaning back sharply.

We laughed.

Next month, Rakka-san and I are going to see “Settsu Gappo-gatsuji” at the Nissay Theater and “Kana-tehon Chushingura” at the National Theater.

2010.12.12

濡木痴夢男のおしゃべり芝居 第百四十九回

Nureki Chimuo's Talking Theater Chapter 149

「妄想乙女倶楽部」は凄いぞ！

“The Daydreaming Girls Club” is Amazing!

Whoa, that was fun!

I just finished reading the first issue of The Daydreaming Girls Club's "[Isis's Backyard](#).” It was so much fun!

All the stories, poems, essays, reviews, and senryu featured in the issue were great, but I especially loved the story “Yasagure M Night” (by Azumi Tachimori)!

The reason I found it so entertaining is that I couldn't help but compare the characters' actions in this story to what I, that is, Nureki Chimuo, do on a daily basis, which made it all the more entertaining.

Well, actually, it's a bit unfair to say I “compared” them. I couldn't possibly compare myself to him. The character in the story, Ryoza Une, is incredibly cool. I, that is, Nureki Chimuo, am completely uncool. For starters, I'm a senile old man in my late elderly years.

Standing at 183 centimeters tall, with muscles like a martial artist and a tanned, rugged face, this protagonist's vigorous drive stands in stark contrast to my own feeble, sulky behavior. Realizing this difference once again, I couldn't help but feel ashamed of my own pitifully weak and frail performance, even though we were doing similar things.

If I put it this way, the author, Azumi Tachimori, might laugh and say, “That's just a character in a novel, after all, my ideal man.”

But, she portrayed him so realistically and skillfully that it's hard to believe he's a fictional character.

The story of Ryoza Une, the photographer who radiates such a wonderful masculine aura, suddenly rushing off to help some Thai girls search for their missing cat, or the depiction of the bar owner in a seedy back alley in Shinjuku, it was all portrayed so skillfully and delightfully.

That's precisely why the inner thoughts of the "I" in the story, Nagiko Kawashiuma, come alive so vividly, striking a chord with readers as if they were Azumi Tachimori herself.

"I see, so that's how it is," I thought, "So this is how a woman with an M-side thinks when a man is doing something to her? Hmm..."

If the work makes the reader think that, then it's already a success.

As for me, even when I'm in a closed room with Rakka-san, doing something, I have absolutely no idea what she's feeling.

After all, Rakka-san never says a word. Unlike Nagiko, who says things like,

"Hey, wait a minute, what are you doing? Let go! No!"

"Nooo! Stop it! Let go!"

"No... ah, come on... please forgive me."

"Stop it! No, this is getting weird!"

"I don't want something that's so utterly perverted! Bondage, whips, and enemas? That's way too unorthodox!"

She's never once uttered any of those agonizing lines.

We've been together for over five years now, and we've probably been to love hotels more than a hundred times, yet she's never once said "No!" or "Stop it!"

When we're alone and I show the slightest hint of wanting to tie her up, she senses it immediately and wraps both arms behind her back on her own, stacking her wrists high.

She's the kind of person who never says lies like "no" or "stop."

(Saying "no" or "stop" is, after all, a kind of coquettishness or provocation. Rakka-san is an honest person who doesn't engage in such coquettishness or provocation. That honesty and purity are what I find so appealing.)

Being timid and easily intimidated, if she were to say "Stop!" I would really stop immediately.

That's why, personally (though it's completely different when it comes to work), I've never once engaged in "lavish" play like Une-san does.

To be honest, I don't really desire play that requires specific locations, props, or physical strength. After all, I'm a physically weak man in reality, I possess none of the thick arms, broad chest, or energetic stamina that Une-san has.

Une-san is amazing (and of course, Nagisa-san is amazing too).

In the blink of an eye, Nagisa-san is stripped naked and hung upside down. And in a wide V-shaped split, no less.

Then, a silicone plug is inserted into Nagisa-san's ass, a funnel is attached to it, and a liter of water from a plastic bottle is poured in all at once. Furthermore, two fingers are inserted into her front slit and moved in and out as if kneading.

On top of that, he inserts a chastity belt with a plug into both her front and back, which have been worked over by his fingers. Furthermore, using a riding crop, he lashes her entire body, from Nagisa-san's widely spread inner thighs and the backs of her thighs, to her buttocks, back, and even the soles of her feet.

Although the passage of time isn't described in detail, this is a grand play that requires considerable effort and time.

Finally, she is lowered from the inverted suspension in a wide V-shaped split, and Nagisa-san's body, still wearing the chastity belt with the plug, is carried into the bathroom. When the plug is removed, a powerful fountain gushes out from inside Nagisa-san. One liter.

That immense sense of release is enough to melt Nagisa-san's body and soul into a gooey mess.

And the next description reads:

"...As the powerful barrel entered her now-lightened body, she could no longer hold back her voice. Her whole body was shaken violently, and she found herself unable to come down from that high place."

However, this "barrel" must refer to Une-san's genitals. In other words, his penis.

From Une-san's perspective, he strips Nagiko-san naked, suspends her upside down, pours a liter of water into her ass, beats her all over, even the soles of her feet, with a riding crop, and then lowers her from the suspension.

Carrying her into the bathroom, making her expel the water that had been poured into her body, and then forcefully inserting his "cannon barrel" into Nagiko-san's body (presumably into her genitals), it's non-stop grueling labor.

(Well, just imagining it is grueling labor for me, but the Superman-like Une-san in the story, it might be a play he pulls off with ease.)

Anyway, Une-san is amazing. I could never hope to match him.

No matter how amazing it is, I can accept it if this is just a novel. A scene from a fantasy.

Fantasy novels are all the more interesting the more they transcend common sense and are outlandish.

(I, too, have written quite a number of stories in the past for magazines like Uramado and SM Select, but almost all of them, or rather, all of them, are fantasy tales hiding my own desires.)

However, in the case of this novel by Azumi Tachimori, since the first half is so well-written with a sense of realism, I found myself wishing the climax in the second half had a bit more realism in the details. That would have made it even more thrilling for readers, especially since the author is a woman.

(Wait a minute. Maybe the wildly imaginative stuff is what other readers find interesting. Maybe I'm the only one who gets excited by realism in the details. If that's the case, I can't really say for sure. After all, no matter how outlandish or surreal the setting or scenario, we fantasize about it precisely because there's a desire behind it.)

And one more thing. Even after such a lavish, extravagant scenario, does Nagiko-san (or perhaps Azumi Tachimori) still want to have the "barrel" inserted in the end?

This is a very important point for men, so please do tell me.

If the "barrel" isn't inserted, does that leave you feeling unsatisfied? As a man, I'd really like to know.

To make it easier to understand, I'll try writing this part out myself.

"...Une-san spread my legs wide apart and strained to insert his 'barrel.' 'That's enough, stop it. I'm satisfied now. I don't need anything more than this,' I said, I moaned as I pulled my hips back to escape his hot 'barrel.' That was my true feeling."

Is it like this, or perhaps, "Oh, I'm so happy! Deeper, deeper! Harder! Oh, oh! After being treated to so many delicacies, to receive such a huge treat at the very end, I'm so happy! Oh, Une-san, I'm so happy!"

Which one is it?

Or perhaps, “I don’t want to, but there’s no helping it,” Nagiko thought. “I’m already completely satisfied, but men seem to be animals who just can’t rest until they ejaculate at the very end, so even though I don’t want to, I’ll accept it. Come on, just get it over with... Thinking this, Nagiko wrapped both arms around Une’s back and held him close.”

Or is it that?

Three choices. Of course, it varies from person to person, but where does Nagiko’s true heart lie? For a man, no, for me, this is a very important matter.

I apologize for adding this unnecessary comment afterward. Please forgive me if it offends you.

In any case, “Yasagure M Night” was a substantial, compelling work.

Even back when SM magazines were at their peak, there probably wasn’t a work with this much passion.

I can’t wait for the second issue of “Isis’s Backyard” from the Daydreaming Girls Club.

2010.12.15

濡木痴夢男のおしゃべり芝居 第百五十回

Nureki Chimuo's Talking Theater Chapter 150

佐伯香也子さんへの返事

Reply to Kayako Saeki

Kayako Saeki, thank you very much for your kind letter. I've had a series of events I had to attend over the past few weeks, and while I was busy with those, I completely neglected to reply to your letter. I'm so sorry. It really is a case of "no time to spare."

It was a truly luxurious and heartfelt letter from you, one that arrived in a glossy, thick envelope, on high-quality stationery edged with even more vibrant colors, with each character carefully written in pen. What's more, a mail carrier on a bicycle trudged up three flights of stairs and delivered that beautiful package right to my door, a rare and thoughtful gesture these days.

The regular script characters, written with precision and sincerity, stroke by stroke, seemed to reflect your very personality, and I thoroughly enjoyed reading your letter.

At the beginning of your letter, I was delighted to read your thoughts on the film "Hostage," which I wrote, directed, and starred in.

"...In the dim light, it felt as though even the dust and body heat were trapped there, and I sensed an intensely intimate, sensual atmosphere.

Just as you wrote in this magazine, I think it was a truly unique visual experience, devoid of conventional lighting.

And then, the final candle scene.

The flickering of the flame, framed by geometric rope patterns, was so beautiful that I found myself mesmerized.

Your Edo dialect was wonderful, too!

It reminded me a little of Kokontei Shinsho..."

(Note by Nureki. “This magazine” refers to “Mania Club.” I had the script I wrote for the production published in this magazine. In it, I had written down, more than necessary, the precautions for the shoot, persistently, in minute detail and in a rather nagging manner. And I had the production manager, the cameraman, and the cast read it a few days before filming.)

Kayako-san described the footage as possessing a “dense, erotic atmosphere” and featuring “hostages,” but that was precisely my intention. In the videos of this kind that are so common today, that “dim, erotic aura” has all but vanished.

Even when labeled “SM,” they ultimately go to great lengths to focus solely on the lower abdomen of the woman being tormented, pandering to the viewer.

Because they concentrate their efforts solely on creating footage resembling a “torture, cruelty, and endurance contest,” the “sensual” allure hidden within the human body has faded away.

The mysterious, sweet nectar of SM eroticism lies quietly enshrined within that “sensual” darkness, yet they refuse to turn their gaze toward that darkness (or rather, they simply do not understand the delights lurking at the bottom of that darkness).

While these “torture endurance contest” videos clearly demonstrate the incredible endurance of the female body, the essential eroticism has completely vanished.

Even when shown a close-up of two or three thick, phallic vibrators being forced into a woman’s genitals, I think “Wow, that’s impressive! She’s really holding up well!”

I find myself merely admiring her athletic-style endurance.

Even when watching footage of a woman suspended upside down with her legs spread in a V-shape, having an enema syringe thrust into her anus as liquid is injected, even if I’m startled by the acrobatic pose, I don’t really feel any particular eroticism.

Unless the inner world of a woman in such a position, that is, her psychology, is depicted, it’s just like watching a soulless doll floating in the air.

As I was writing this reply, I found myself wanting to make a sequel to “Hostage.”

Production (meaning all the work from thorough preparation before filming, through the shoot itself, to completion) will be handled by Sachi Yamanouchi and Nakahara Rutsu, just as in the previous film.

Since this is “Hostage 2,” the cast will also be the same as the previous film, Fuyuki Sawato-san and Shion Kasumi-san.

The cameraman will, of course, be the same as well. In short, the entire crew is from the Nureki Group.

Actually, the other day, at an event completely unrelated to SM, I happened to meet Sachi Yamanouchi and Nakahara Rutsu, and we ended up talking about the time of “Hostage.” As usual, we had a great time, and I got a little carried away and said,

“Shall we shoot the sequel to ‘Hostage’?”

“Let’s do it! When we finished the last shoot, you said right away that we should do another one, didn’t you, Sensei?”

“Besides, that video ends with the words ‘To Be Continued’ at the very end.”

“Oh, that’s right. Alright, let’s do it.”

And that’s how it came to be.

But right now, I’m in the middle of writing a five-volume series titled “The Story of Minomura Ko” (working title) for Kawade Shobo Shinsha, so I’m not sure if I’ll actually have the time to shoot the second part of “Hostage.”

(What’s more, I’m co-authoring this “Story of Minomura Ko” with Nakahara Rutsu.)

But if those two beauties, Yamanouchi and Nakahara, were to corner me again, I’d probably put my writing on hold and get the filming done first.

(I like them, after all.)

That’s right, next time we film, please have Kayako join us on set as part of the crew. And please come up with plenty of lewd ideas while we’re there.

Whoops, somehow the conversation has strayed off topic again. No matter how old I get, I just can’t settle down.

Kayako Saeki, I was really happy to read the part in your letter that said, “...Your Edo dialect is wonderful too! It reminded me a little of Kokontei Shinsho.”

Actually, I’ve been told that before. It was said to me by a professional comedian who performs on stage every day. It made me happy.

Yes, of course I like Shinsho. I’ve been familiar with Shinsho’s performances since I was a child. I was even in the audience at Suehirotei in Shinjuku when Shinsho came out drunk, mumbled incoherently, and fell asleep right there on stage.

(Back then, I was working every day as a hired hand on the sets of bondage photo shoots for SM Select, SM Collector, and SM Fan.)

I'm the kind of person who doesn't have a single thing to brag about, but I am good at telling stories in the Edo dialect.

The events I host, not as Nureki Chimuo, are actually storytelling performances using the Edo dialect. I do all sorts of things.

My long time friends, Yamanouchi Sachi, Nakahara Rutsu, and Saotome Hiromi, all know this.

The next time I hold such a gathering, I'll slip an invitation to Kayako-san as well. However, this must remain a strict secret. If people confuse the name I use for my storytelling with my work as Nureki Chimuo, it leads to all sorts of unpleasant situations.

There was an acquaintance of mine who does storytelling who knew that Nureki Chimuo and I were the same person, and they went around spreading the word everywhere, which caused me a great deal of distress.

(I seem to recall writing about this quite a while ago in this "Talking Theater" as well.)

Oh, I've gone off on a tangent again.

For now, I'll just apologize for the delayed reply and leave it at that.

Strictly speaking, I should have started by thanking you for the copy of the "Isis' Backyard" from the Daydreaming Girls Club that you sent me.

I did indeed receive it via the Director of the Sex Industry Museum.

Congratulations. You've produced a splendid magazine with such rich content. I'm truly delighted for you.

In the previous installment of this "Talking Theater," I was so excited after reading it that I immediately wrote my thoughts on the content, and in doing so, I missed the chance to express my gratitude, which has left things a bit jumbled. Please forgive my rudeness. I'll write more about "Isis' Backyard" another time.

2010.12.30

濡木痴夢男のおしゃべり芝居 第百五十一回

Nureki Chimuo's Talking Theater Chapter 151

古い小屋をたずねていきます

I'm Heading Over to the Old Shed

Rakka-san.

Yesterday, after saying goodbye to you, it was still early, so I decided to go see a movie. I walked all the way to that theater and stood there thinking for a little while.

It was a double feature of two somewhat appealing comedies. The American film "The Hangover" and the U.S.-U.K. co-production "The Men Who Stare at Goats."

The start times were just right, so I was about to go in. But then I decided against it.

Lately, I've been putting off writing the manuscript titled "The Story of Minomura Ko" (working title) that Kawade Shobo has commissioned me to write.

(Because I've had to write manuscripts for Web Sniper and SM Net.)

Okay, I decided to head straight home and continue writing "The Story of Minomura Ko."

On my way to the station, I stopped by Book Off and bought a copy of Yoh Henmi's "The Lukewarm Water of the Red Bridge" from the Bunshun Bunko series.

It had a list price of 250 yen, so when I paid 300 yen, I got 175 yen in change. It turned out to be a half-price sale day.

Cheap! It's so cheap I almost feel bad.

Takaaki Yoshimoto wrote the commentary, and I wanted to read that.

I've also seen the film adaptation of "The Lukewarm Water of the Red Bridge" directed by Shohei Imamura. It was a thrilling and interesting movie.

Once I got on the train, I started to feel hungry.

Then, the image of that delicious katsudon from “Umebayashi” inside Akihabara Station popped into my mind.

I want to eat it!

A fierce internal struggle raged between the urge to get back to my room as soon as possible to tackle the overdue manuscript and the desire to eat Umebayashi's 750 yen katsudon.

I am a base person.

Fifteen minutes later, I was eating that katsudon.

It was so delicious, so delicious, I almost cried. I thought to myself, “This is pure pleasure.”

Well, come to think of it, it's simply that this restaurant's slightly sweet katsudon suits my taste.

(Come to think of it, didn't Nagai Kufu die while eating his favorite katsudon at a neighborhood diner?)

After that, I drank a 250 yen hot coffee at the coffee shop across from Umebayashi. This was delicious, too. They even have wine.

There's a table in the center for eating and drinking, and nearly ten different shops are lined up around it. Customers choose what they like, carry it over themselves, and sit down to eat wherever they please.

It's the kind of place that's been popping up all over the place for the past few years. With Japanese soba shops, Chinese snack bars, and bakeries all under one roof, it might seem a bit chaotic, but the interior design is fresh and thoughtful, giving it a stylish, modern food court vibe.

Sipping hot coffee after eating a katsudon while leisurely reading the writings of Tsuneo Henmi and Takaaki Yoshimoto was a truly luxurious pleasure. Calling it bliss might be an overstatement, but it was indeed a wonderful feeling.

In fact, at this coffee shop, at 11 AM, four days from now, I will be waiting for Rakka-san. And, using this place as our starting point, we will spend a delightful day together.

At exactly 11 AM four days from now, or perhaps five minutes before 11, or maybe five minutes past 11, you will appear in my line of sight, wearing your usual black hat, smiling shyly.

When you spot me, your eyes beneath the hat will widen in surprise, and you'll shyly cover your lips with three fingers of your left hand (for some reason, always the left hand), not that you only have three fingers, you have five, of course. Then, tilting your neck and shoulders slightly to the left, you'll take a couple of wobbly steps backward. Then, when you return to your original spot, this time with a clear smile, bowing your head, approaching me, you'll say, "Good morning."

On this day (that is, four days later), the place I'll be showing you isn't the usual Asakusa, but an unknown location far from Tokyo, a place I've hardly ever been to myself.

Well, actually, I did visit the bustling area centered around the station a few times several years ago. There were plenty of movie theaters there, too.

But according to the map, the place I'm taking you to is about a twenty or thirty minute walk from the station, far from the downtown area.

You and I won't take a taxi, we'll walk there hand in hand, getting along just fine.

Will we actually be able to reach that unknown place without getting lost? But isn't it a little exciting to walk together down streets we've never walked before in an unfamiliar town far from Tokyo, filled with both anxiety and a sense of anticipation? It's bound to be fun. It's definitely going to be fun.

The place you and I will reach is a quiet, aging two-story wooden building, tucked away in a corner of a street lined with shabby, struggling shops. Or perhaps it's a dilapidated building with patches of peeling plaster. In short, it's a small theater.

"Wait, 'what's plastered?'" you ask.

I'm not exactly sure myself.

(Though you'd know right away if you saw it.)

I'll look it up in the dictionary.

It says that mortar is a mixture of cement and sand, kneaded with water. It's used for joining stone and bricks, and for finishing walls and floors.

Well, in short, it means that rough-textured, stain-covered brown building.

That said, I haven't actually seen that little theater myself.

Since I've never seen it, I'm going to check it out with high expectations.

The image of that shabby theater's slightly grimy, mortar-plastered exterior is just a figment of my imagination.

It's a fantasy of mine. I just hope it's like that. If there were a few actor's banners dyed red, green, yellow and navy blue standing in front of the theater, I'd be absolutely thrilled.

That's the image of the Shirahige Theater from the "The Second Floor Where the Lewd Woman Lives" series of novels I wrote long ago under the pen name Fujumi Iku, Rakka-san.

And I believe the plays performed in such a theater would surely be of a nature befitting such a venue.

For the past few years, every month (or even two or three times a month) I've been watching those performances with you, Rakka-san, in Asakusa, amidst the explosive cheers of that usual, packed-to-the-brim audience, where the actors give their all with such passionate, all-out performances. I wonder what kind of art they'll present when they come to this lonely stage far from Tokyo.

Partly because I want to find that out for myself, I'm going to visit. And I want to show you that kind of stage.

If a troupe that has left Tokyo delivers a performance as passionate as the ones in Asakusa, I will of course be delighted and offer my heartfelt applause. Conversely, even if they reveal that they are cutting corners, I can accept that as well.

To me, the artistry of those who perform day and night on the Asakusa stage looks, without exaggeration, as if they are risking their lives.

For a whole month, I believe each and every one of them is giving 120 percent of their spirit and physical strength.

If they were to keep that up for two months, I think they would start collapsing one after another. It wouldn't be surprising if they did.

I believe their lives, centered around the stage, are something truly extraordinary, going beyond the limits of human physical and mental endurance.

It is an art form so intense and grueling. That's why I'd be curious to see how they unwind when they're away from Asakusa.

Huh? What did you say?

Are you saying that's a rather mean-spirited curiosity?

Yes, I know.

Writers, by nature, possess malicious and cruel hearts.

But you know, Rakka-san.

Maybe... and I mean just maybe... to cater to the tastes of the regulars who come to that old theater in an old town far from Tokyo, they might just slip in a performance of an old play, something like “Stepmother’s Cruelty” or a tale of karma, you know, Rakka-san.

2011.1.5

濡木痴夢男のおしゃべり芝居 第百五十二回

Nureki Chimuo's Talking Theater Chapter 152

貸し座布団一枚百円

Rental Cushions. 100 Yen Apiece

I went to that coffee shop an hour before the agreed time.

I planned to work on the draft of "The Story of Minomura Ko," which I am currently writing while sipping my coffee.

It looks like it will be a five-volume series, and I'm prepared to write about 1200 pages in total, but so far I've only written 281 pages. I'm behind schedule. I need to finish it by the first half of this year.

I opened my notebook for the draft.

"Various Episodes of Minomura Ko"

I wrote that on a line and jotted down notes as they came to mind. It went something like this.

1. Riding in a taxi with Minomura. When we got out, he didn't take the change. If the fare comes to an exact amount, he'll pull a hundred or two hundred yen out of his wallet and hand it to the driver, saying "Keep the change."

2. At the Tori Shrine in Asakusa. A dense wave of worshippers packed tightly together. It was incredibly crowded in front of the offering box at the main hall. A police officer stood at the front, shouting to keep the crowd in order. Minomura said, "Let's try aiming at that officer" and threw a coin from within the crowd about twenty meters away.

It didn't hit the officer, but he glared at Minomura from a distance, then furiously pushed his way through the crowd toward him. "You just threw that at me, didn't you?" he said, looking furious. Minomura trembled and bowed his head repeatedly, apologizing over and over, "I'm sorry, I'm sorry."

3. In Asakusa they haggle with tourists every day. Two large blankets that look high quality at first glance, a grandfather clock that looks luxurious, and a transistor radio, all for a total of 1000 yen. It's a kind of "tankabai" deal, and as someone born and raised in Asakusa, I know these are mostly unreliable goods. Minomura, standing next to me, shouted "I'll take it!" and handed the seller a thousand-yen bill. I tried to stop him, but there was no time. The seller glared at me with a sharp look. Carrying the large bundle with both hands, Minomura headed back to Hiyoshi on the Tokyu Tokyo Line.

I was jotting down five or six of these anecdotes in my notebook as they came to mind when, suddenly, someone tapped me on the shoulder from behind, accompanied by a startled "Whoa!"

When I turned around, it was Rakka-san.

I glanced at my watch. It was 10:40. Uncharacteristically, you had arrived a full twenty minutes earlier than we had agreed.

With both hands hanging loosely at your sides, you were chuckling as you shook your body in small, jerky movements.

In other words, you hadn't performed your usual ritual for these meetups. Holding up three fingers on your left hand, covering your mouth bashfully, and shifting awkwardly three or four steps to the side.

You must have read the previous installment of this "Talking Theater" that I wrote (you're usually the first to read it), and made a conscious effort not to show that bashful behavior of yours today.

(I understand exactly how you feel.)

It must be embarrassing for you to instinctively cover your lips with your finger out of shyness at the moment we meet, and then have me point it out to you.

Either way, there's no doubt that to a man's eyes, it's a charming and endearing gesture.

"You're early. Would you like some coffee?" I said, and motioned for you to take the chair next to me.

Since you arrived twenty minutes early, that means we have twenty extra minutes to chat.

Even without being so stingy about it, since today is a day just for the two of us, there's no need for us to be so rushed or to both speak at once with such fervor.

(But, to tell the truth, this was actually the same every time.)

After 11:05, we left the coffee shop and boarded the Keihin Tohoku Line. The train was empty.

We talked a lot on that train, too.

I wonder why we always have so much to talk about.

We got off at our destination station. Talking so hard had made me hungry. As always, I'm a base person. When I get hungry, I immediately want to eat something. I just can't stand being hungry.

We ate spaghetti together at the PRONT¹⁵ in front of the station and, while continuing our conversation, we had another cup of coffee.

Even though we had talked so much just four days ago, why do we keep finding so many new things to talk about, one after another?

Anyway, whenever we meet, the things we want to talk about and the things we have to talk about pour out like a dam has burst, and there's no end to it.

While drinking coffee after the meal, the conversation got lively again, and before we knew it, it was past midnight.

The venue we were heading to opens at 12:30. The show starts at 1:00.

Since it's our first time going there, if we factor in the possibility of getting lost along the way, we won't make it in time.

In my previous "Talking Theater" post, I wrote all sorts of cheerful things, like "Let's walk hand in hand through the streets of an unfamiliar town, gazing at unfamiliar scenery," and even prepared a map for the occasion, but I no longer have the time for that.

Once my stomach is full, my whole body feels sluggish, and even walking becomes a hassle. I'm such a pathetic elderly man.

"I won't make it in time. I guess I'll just take a taxi." That's what I decided.

The area in front of the station was a chaotic jumble of buildings of all sizes and heights, and it took quite a bit of effort just to reach the taxi stand.

Even so, the scene in front of the station was frighteningly unattractive and utterly bleak.

¹⁵ This is an Italian restaurant in Japan.

Dirty, small buildings stood in every direction, lined up without a shred of aesthetic sense, blocking the view. It was such an ugly, grotesque sight that I found myself wondering if this was what the desolation of the human heart would look like if it were made tangible.

The number of people coming and going was eerily high. There was no sense of space, and the whole scene felt like the end of the world.

Leaving that station area behind and arriving at my destination, the taxi fare came to just over 800 yen.

I don't have the magnanimity of Minomura Ko, so I make sure to get my change.

As I got out of the taxi and turned left onto a narrow street leading from the wide road into a residential area, the moment I stood at the corner, I immediately saw a small hut.

To my surprise, standing in front of that building were two banners dyed red, green, yellow, and navy blue.

"Ah, ah, ah, there it is!"

I couldn't help but shout in a low voice.

"They're up, they're up, the banners are up, right, right? Just like I wrote in our last talk show, the banners are up, aren't they? Right, right, right!"

I was deeply moved.

It was two stories tall, with a mortar-coated exterior.

It appeared that white mortar had been applied over the old mortar, so the walls of the building were a white that made the dirt stand out.

Even so, unlike in Asakusa, there were no crowds of people flocking around the building in a festive atmosphere.

It felt deserted. There wasn't a single person in sight. Even the wind blowing felt desolate.

It wasn't the corner of a shopping district I'd pictured in my mind, but rather a shack in a gray residential area with rows of old houses, lacking any liveliness. I couldn't even see a single passerby.

If this were Asakusa, it would be a huge commotion by now.

Crowds of people, their chests swelling with anticipation and joy at the thought that “the time for pleasure is about to begin,” would be surrounding the building, roaring and howling.

An almost obscene, raucous buzz spills out from inside the shack onto the street, and it takes real courage to step into that swirling mass of people.

Yet here, look at this. It is quiet, damp, and still, with a gloomy atmosphere hanging in the air. There is no sign of the vitality that usually brings entertainment to the townspeople.

But that is exactly how it is. This atmosphere, too, was part of my premonition. No, I also felt that this was exactly how it had to be.

I handed a 5000 yen bill to the ticket window. Three thousand two hundred yen for two people.

I received 1800 yen in change. I found out later that the ticket booth and the concession stand inside the venue were actually one and the same.

A middle-aged woman worked alone at the counter, selling tickets and attending to customers who came to the concession stand to buy candy or tea.

A man standing behind the curtain at the entrance took the tickets. I also found out later that this man (or perhaps I should call him an old man) served as the lighting technician for the stage while standing behind the curtain.

As soon as you enter there is a narrow earthen-floored area and right in front of you is a raised platform.

A space covered in tatami mats spread out before us, and that was the audience seating area. In other words, the audience took off their shoes, stepped up onto the tatami, and faced the stage.

There was a cardboard box placed on the earthen floor, filled with many used plastic bags.

“Please put your shoes in those bags and bring them up with you,” an older woman who appeared to be an usher told me.

As I stepped up to sit on the tatami, the usher said, “One hundred yen for the cushions,” and gave a light tap to the pile of cushions stacked beside her. I handed her two hundred-yen coins, borrowed two cushions, and set down next to you.

This wasn’t the first time I’d seen a play under such a system.

Long ago, at the Suzumoto Engeijo theater in Ichikawa City, Chiba Prefecture, if you paid a fee, they would lend you a cushion and a tray for cigarettes. In winter, they would also lend you a hand warmer. A hand warmer is a small brazier.

(I wrote about this a few years ago in this “Talking Theater” column as well. It was at this Suzumoto Engeijo that I saw “Hiaburi,” a play written by Izamitaro Suzuki and based on the life of Itoh Seiu. What’s more, I was sitting right next to Itoh Seiu...)

It was ten minutes before one o’clock.

When we entered, there were about thirty people in the audience. Many of them were elderly. Everyone was sitting with their bottoms pressed flat against their zabuton cushions.

As the start time approached, the number grew to about fifty. Just before the curtain rose, the audience had somehow swelled even further. I suppose there were about seventy people in total.

At 1 PM, right on the dot, the gong sounded and an announcement rang out.

The first item on the program was a mini-show.

The second was the play “Kanchigai.”

The third act was the grand show.

As soon as the announcement ended and the curtain rose, the troupe leader, seated in the seiza posture at the front, gave a greeting. Immediately after that, the dance “Sanbaso,” performed by three young dancers, began.

This was not the traditional Kabuki dance “Sanbaso” performed to Nagauta music. While the costumes were somewhat authentic, the song was an arrangement of Nagauta, making it a distinctly modern style Sanbaso. The dancers performed to the sound of a tape or CD played offstage.

Three young actors, their faces beautifully and thickly coated in pure white powder, danced earnestly and with all their might. After dancing for about fifteen minutes, this was the “mini-show.”

Oh dear, writing like this makes the text get longer and longer. That wasn’t part of my plan. Since the entire experience was so moving, I feel compelled to write about every detail. So, I suppose I have no choice.

But Rakka-san. This time, rather than writing something like this, I actually wanted to start right from the beginning by pouring out my feeling, how I was overwhelmed by the consummate artistry of the two elders of this troupe. Yet, before I knew it, it turned out like this. Still, this is a record in its own right.

Ah, it was truly wonderful. Hata Joji and Kanai Yasuo.

Their artistry, which doesn't even look like art. Artistry steeped in years of experience.

Next time, I'll dive right in and write about their performance. For my own sake.

2011.1.11

濡木痴夢男のおしゃべり芝居 第百五十三回

Nureki Chimuo's Talking Theater Chapter 153

スリッパを二足買いました

I Bought Two Pairs of Slippers

Tomorrow is the day I will lose the virginity I have held onto for so long.

Actually, saying that it's the day my "hymen," which I've protected for so long, will be broken would be a more shocking way to put it.

No, no, come to think of it, it's not really something I've felt I've been protecting all this time.

It's just that no one was after my virginity in the first place.

In other words, I never actually had any virginity to begin with.

Who would even want my hymen? In other words, it has no value.

And yet, for some strange reason, someone has come along who wants it.

And since I was in a strangely good mood at the time, I ended up replying, "Sure, why not."

Come to think of it, there was only one time in the past when I invited three people, two men and a woman, into this workroom. To be precise, it was August 1, 2004.

It wasn't so much an invitation as it was asking them to help me move from Meguro, where I'd lived for over a decade, to this place.

(I see. Has it really been over six years since then?)

All three of them came at the same time.

One was an editor from the publishing house that serializes my essays.

Another was a painter I've been close with for some time. Since this person lives relatively nearby, they came by bicycle.

The third was a woman who has been dancing on stage for a very long time.

However, when these three arrived, my study hadn't yet taken shape as a proper workspace because the moving boxes from my previous address hadn't arrived yet.

There wasn't even a desk. Just a few cardboard boxes and an empty space.

One table and four chairs. We gathered around that table and toasted with takeout pizza and canned beer.

So it didn't really feel like my "hymen" had been broken. It was still in its virgin state.

About three years ago, when I started this "Talking Theater" series at the suggestion of Nakahara Rutsu, I took a few photos of my workroom with a cheap disposable camera and posted them on my website.

Even though I say it was Nakahara Rutsu's suggestion, I had absolutely no knowledge of computers, the internet, or websites, so it was Nakahara Rutsu who actually handled everything in a concrete and practical way.

I don't do anything. It's not that I choose not to. It's that I can't. I'm illiterate when it comes to IT equipment.

All I do is write the manuscript letter by letter with a ballpoint pen and send it to her via fax.

The photos of my workroom that I posted on the website at that time were, as mentioned earlier, taken by me myself, capturing my own embarrassing appearance.

So, in a sense, these photos are my "masturbation."

Masturbation is embarrassing if others see it, but this is different.

Tomorrow will be truly embarrassing (or so I think).

A beautiful editor from a prestigious publishing house, one of the industry's "A-class" films, and a photographer regarded as one of the top talents of his generation will be visiting.

(I was ignorant and didn't know this photographer's reputation or the quality of his work. Nakahara Rutsu told me about him. As expected of the Director of the Sex Industry Museum, she knows her stuff.)

This photographer asked me to let him take my virginity. It was because he saw a photo of my workroom that I took three years ago and that Nakahara Rutsu posted on her website.

Apparently, my masturbation was quite stimulating for that photographer.

Giving my virginity to someone else (it's obviously going to be someone else) is a huge deal. It's the equivalent of losing one's virginity.

(But you know, to tell you the truth, my virginity isn't worth a thing. But I won't say that now.)

For me, however, it is somewhat stimulating.

That's right. I've decided to offer up my virginity in search of a little excitement, and tomorrow is finally the day I bid farewell to it.

Ah, I guess I am a little nervous after all. After all, it's the first time someone else's feet will step into my workroom.

I have absolutely no idea how they'll use the photos of my virginity.

I suppose he'd tell me if I asked, but it's too much trouble so I won't even ask.

After all, I'm already eighty-one years old.

When you've lived for eighty-one years, all that long winded explaining just gets on your nerves, and you start to feel like, "Whatever, just do whatever you want."

So, that's why I'm writing this now, thinking it might be fun to let a stranger into my horribly dirty, vulgar, dusty, and chaotic study for the first time, give them a shock, watch their reaction, and get a little bit of excitement out of it.

I bought two new pairs of slippers for the two people coming tomorrow.

Naturally, there have never been any slippers in my room before.

The moment you take off your shoes and step inside, the soles of your feet get dirty. They get covered in dust. So I bought two pairs of slippers at the supermarket for 350 yen each. It's my way of showing a little hospitality.

Speaking of yesterday, I actually met this amazing woman named Chigusa Hanakawa at the Sex Industry Museum in Iidabashi.

Chigusa Hanakawa is a woman who worked as a model forty-five years ago. For more information about her, please read my paperback book, "Kitan Club and Its Surroundings," published by Kawade Shobo Shinsha. It goes into detail about her.

The Sex Industry Museum has many magazines featuring her.

It was our first reunion in forty-five years. Even though we'd lost touch and hadn't seen each other at all until now, it felt as though we'd met just yesterday and were chatting today. Chigusa Hanakawa-san spoke cheerfully, smiling brightly and laughing nonstop as we talked for two hours straight.

But ultimately, it all comes down to my conversational skills, my ability to set the mood, and my talent for steering the conversation toward those vague, frivolous, and irresponsible stories from the past, since if I'd taken her seriously, she'd have been a bore.

Still, I realized once again that the Sex Industry Museum is the only place where I can freely engage in those lighthearted conversations with a model from forty-five years ago. In that sense, too, the Sex Industry Museum is a truly valuable institution.

Director Nakahara listened to the rambling old stories between me and Chigusa Hanakawa-san with a cheerful smile, didn't she?

"Why don't you write about today for the next installment of 'Talking Theater?'" Director Nakahara suggested, but my reunion with her was, after all, nothing more than that, and there's nothing else to write about. There's no substance to it.

Even for an essay as devoid of ideology as this, I suppose I can't write it without raising some kind of issue.

More importantly, tomorrow afternoon, after the photo shoot with that beautiful editor and the photographer, and the interview with me, there's a gathering in the evening, sort of like a planning meeting over drinks for my theater troupe's next performance.

It seems my role is that of an old man, not a "zashiki warashi" (a child spirit) but a "zashiki-jiji" (an old man spirit), who has taken up residence in an old family home. Apparently, he's practically senile and just mutters strange things all the time.

I can't seem to memorize my lines anymore, so they've decided to write them out boldly and prominently all over the stage set, meaning the set is designed so that my lines are visible to the audience, and the play will proceed with me reading them aloud. It seems to be a play with a concept I've never seen or heard of before.

This is a script written specifically for me by our resident playwright.

“Yeah, that’s interesting, that really is interesting,” I said, my voice full of excitement as I listened on the phone.

If all goes well, this looks like it might turn out to be a rather stimulating play for me.

Meeting up with my theater troupe colleagues to discuss a play like this seems more stimulating than exposing my workroom.

2011.2.28

濡木痴夢男のおしゃべり芝居 第百五十四回

Nureki Chimuo's Talking Theater Chapter 154

ともしび座うごきだす

The Tomoshi-bi-za Begins to Move

I don't know what twist of fate it was, but I've been so busy these past few months that I haven't had a moment to write "Talking Theater."

Whether you call it work or favors I've been asked to do, tasks just kept piling up one after another, and I didn't even have time to get a good night's sleep.

I love to sleep lazily and aimlessly, whether it's day or night. It's not because of my age. I've loved sleeping ever since I was young. You could say sleeping is my only pleasure.

(What a cheap pleasure!)

As for pastimes, or rather, various forms of pleasure, other than sleeping, they are often "work" for me.

If you'll forgive me for sounding a bit pretentious, I am a person who has lived my life treating pleasure as work.

I've written up to 319 pages of "The Story of Minomura Ko" (working title), a project I'm working on for Kawade Shobo Shinsha.

That's 318 pages, written character by character with a ballpoint pen in the squares of 400-character manuscript paper. I still have 700 pages left to write.

Since I'm writing about Minomura Ko, this is of course a fun job, much like a pastime, but other new pleasures keep barging in, so I've been attending to those as well, and I'm taking a little break right now.

There are frequent times when I can't finish a particular story within this "Talking Theater," and even though I say, "I'll continue this next time," I end up unable to write any further.

Even things I absolutely must write down right away end up left unfinished because I simply can't find the time. Then, immediately, new tasks pile up before me.

That new task is also important, and the situation arises where I must tackle it first. The previous task gets dragged out and put off indefinitely.

Yesterday, R-san came to me with a sharp, raised eyebrow.

"Sensei, please write about Tomoshi-bi-za in 'Talking Theater.' You can't forget about it. How long do you plan to keep 'Talking Theater' on hiatus?"

It was a pretty stern tone.

I found myself at a loss for words, "Oh, right, I have to write that too."

Even without R-san telling me, I must write about Tomoshi-ba-za.

I'd been thinking that every day for the past few days while working on other tasks. I can't make her angry. For someone as clueless about IT as I am, she's practically a godsend.

(After all, R-san is in charge of every single aspect of this "Talking Theater." Without her, "Talking Theater" wouldn't have gotten off the ground in the first place, nor would it have survived. Just as I write each character by hand with a ballpoint pen, she types each character of that manuscript into a word processor and puts it together online. To date, the total word count has reportedly reached a staggering 700,000 characters. R-san, thank you!)

Now, about this group we've named "Tomoshi-bi-za."

There's quite a story behind it, but I'll skip the details here and keep it brief.

The core members are Sachi Yamanouchi, Nakahara Rutsu, myself, and though we're still in negotiations, Hiromi Saotome.

They are the key members who produced the video work "Hostage" recently, and they possess various skills that will be useful in real world situations.

They are the colleagues I trust the most right now, people I get along with perfectly. Getting along well is a basic requirement, but what gives me real confidence is that each of them possesses outstanding abilities in their respective professional fields. No matter how good someone's personality is, if they aren't useful on a creative set, I simply can't include them in the team.

For some time now, every time Sachi Yamanouchi and Nakahara Rutsu met, they would discuss wanting to create a project to follow “Hostage.” This reached my ears, and we have now taken the first step toward realizing our next project.

“Tomoshi-bi-za” is, simply put, the name of the group formed to ensure the successful realization of our next project.

However, we’ve decided that this time, instead of moving images, that is, a video, we will create a photo book.

The reason we settled on a photo book actually stems from the previous installment of this “Talking Theater” series, “I Bought Two Pairs of Slippers.”

Photographer Kyochi Tsuzuki took photos of my, that is, Nureki Chimuo’s, workroom, as well as of me, who has made that room my home, and kindly compiled them into a compact photo book in the style of a private edition.

It was a truly wonderful photo book, full of love and handmade feel.

When Nakahara Rutsu and Sachi Yamanouchi got their hands on it, they were instantly and powerfully inspired. We decided to use this photo book as a reference and create one of our own.

So, while photographer Tsuzuki’s photo book “Tabata Hojoki” served as the catalyst, the underlying reality was that there was a sense of stifling frustration regarding the respective circumstances swirling around them.

I, too, have that sort of stifling frustration and dissatisfaction. Well, it’s not as if I don’t. (No, I have plenty of it.) But since I’m a man with one foot already in the grave, I’ve given up on most things.

For my part, I feel a desire to help document, in a clear and concrete form, the talents of Sachi Yamanouchi, a person who, though unknown to the public as a photographer, possesses an exceptional sensibility, by lending my own modest support.

Fortunately, a fine model named Fuyuki Sawato is within earshot of my voice. She is a model who embodies a delicate, razor-sharp intensity throughout her entire being, perfectly suited to the meticulous sensibility of photographer Sachi Yamanouchi. She is a person of intense individuality.

Yamanouchi, who serves not only as a photographer but also as a producer, contacted the model, Fuyuki, and reported, “I received a reply from Fuyuki. She said she’d be delighted to model for us. She also wrote in her email that just the thought of being able to touch your ropes again makes her happy and fills her with energy.”

Then, “I’m absolutely thrilled that she’s so eager to do this. Let’s set a date and get things moving. Please pass on your requests to Nakahara-san, and Nakahara-san and I will handle the details together.”

That was the reply from Yamanouchi.

We considered various shooting locations, but after hearing Nakahara Rutsu-san’s opinion, we decided to shoot at Sachi Yamanouchi’s home.

(Or perhaps this, too, was influenced by the “Tabata Hojoki.”)

So, a few days ago, I went to the Yamanouchi residence with Nakahara Rutsu to scout the location. Yamanouchi welcomed us by making zenzai¹⁶ over the stove.

It was an amazing room. Model Fuyuki is unique, but the setting for this shoot is also incredibly unique. There was a beautiful pillar, which made me happy.

I won’t describe here exactly how unique and amazing it is. Let’s just say that you’ll understand once you see the photos taken by Sachi Yamanouchi.

Whether the workroom of Nureki Chimuo, photographed by Tsuzuki, is more impressive, or the Yamanouchi residence, photographed by Yamanouchi, is more impressive, that’s something to look forward to.

I have a feeling that Yamanouchi’s photos might be a bit better, simply because they feature the model, Fuyuki.

Before I knew it, I’d dropped the honorifics and was referring to them as Sachi Yamanouchi and Nakahara Rutsu. I wonder if they’ll take offense. Well, I doubt it.

When they appear as staff members of “Tomoshibia-za,” I’ll continue to omit the honorifics. That feels more natural.

The title of the photo collection has already been decided.

It’s called “Daydream.” Sachi Yamanouchi agrees with it, too.

Will “Daydream” win out, or will “Tabata Hojoki” win out? Whichever one wins, the protagonist within these two photo books will be me.

Thinking that makes me feel rather good. And it makes me conscious of my responsibility.

¹⁶ Zenzai is a red bean soup.

2011.3.1

濡木痴夢男のおしゃべり芝居 第百五十五回

Nureki Chimuo's Talking Theater Chapter 155

人間くさい熱い空間

A Warm, Down to Earth Atmosphere

Fuyuki Sawato, did you get a chance to read our last spoken word play, “The Tomoshi-bi-za Moves?”

We’ve decided to film you for our next “Tomoshi-bi-za” production.

As for Tomoshi-bi-za, it’s pretty much as I described last time, but I’ll go over the finer details when we meet next time.

The new location where we’ll be photographing you is quite impressive, unlike the typical commercial studios that have been meticulously set up to look exactly like the kind of place where you’d usually pose as a model.

By “quite something,” I mean it’s wonderful.

Just stepping inside, you’ll feel a deep resonance that really resonates with your heart and gets you excited.

As for me, the moment I glanced around the room, I moaned, “Whoa, this is incredible! This is absolutely amazing!” and I got an instant erection.

Just stepping into the studio and breathing in that air was enough to give me an erection, so you can imagine just how intense the atmosphere is.

Huh? You say you can’t possibly imagine it just from that?

Oh, right. Since what you’ve experienced in the past were strictly commercial rental studios charged by the hours, it might be hard for you to picture.

Rental studios, while the backdrops and furnishings are set up to look the part, generally lack a sense of life, feel cold and impersonal, and, in short, lack realism.

To put it bluntly, even if the scenery looks convincing, no matter what you do there, it's nothing more than a space devoid of human spirit.

And when you can't sense human spirit, it means that no matter how much you tie up a beautiful woman in that space, her presence will feel thin and insubstantial, resulting in photos that look staged, artificial, and shallow, with a cold, lifeless quality.

In contrast, this time's shooting location, the Yamanouchi residence, is incredible.

What's so incredible about it? Well, actually, I'd better not say it here.

On the day of the shoot, I'll take you there and let you see it for yourself right away.

When you come into contact with that space, that feverish, intensely human atmosphere, I wonder what kind of reaction you, with your sharp reflexes, will have.

(Hehehe... I'm really looking forward to it...)

You'll probably gasp, "Oh!" and stand frozen at the entrance to the room for a while.

You'll feel the texture of my ropes, even before I've done a thing, as a tangible sensation.

That said, I don't intend to do anything terrible to your body. My ropes should be just the same as always.

I have absolutely no desire to make you the heroine of some "Cruel Torture Endurance Contest."

I don't like spaces decorated with what might be called a "triangular wooden horse," leather or wooden restraints, or shelves lined with whips. Those kinds of things that look terrifying at first glance.

To me, those items can't help but look like tools used by people who lack confidence in their rope work, serving only to prove their lack of confidence.

(My apologies to those who enjoy such torture devices.)

I automatically steer clear of photo books that go out of their way to feature that kind of torture device on the cover. I can pretty much guess what the photos inside will look like.

It's bound to be full of pushy scenes where a model is tied spread-eagled with some foreign object inserted between her legs, as if to say, "Look at this, how amazing is that?"

To be honest, I'm not really a fan of either the videos or photos from "Cruel Torture Endurance Contests."

Photos created using overly elaborate, showy rope work that serves little purpose, combined with binding techniques devoid of any sense of pathos or emotion, are a far cry from the bondage works we enjoy.

They may look similar, but they are fundamentally different.

Just to be clear and avoid any misunderstanding. No matter how much we rope enthusiasts may dislike them, there are certainly people who enjoy that sort of thing, so I would never condemn them.

We simply feel that it differs quite a bit from what we, as rope enthusiasts, prefer.

I produced a video called "Kinbiken Video" in the past, and that work received enthusiastic support from many bondage enthusiasts.

Therefore, I believe I have a good understanding of what kind of works bondage enthusiasts prefer.

This is because my own preferences align perfectly with those of rope enthusiasts.

To fully showcase my personal preferences, I asked Sachi Yamanouchi-san, whom you know well, to handle the camera work for this project.

After consulting with Director Nakahara Rutsu, I boldly requested, "Yamanouchi-san, I'd like to shoot the model Fuyuki at your home."

The other day, I went on a location scouting trip with Nakahara-san, and we came back deeply moved and thrilled. That's how it all came about.

There is a bimonthly magazine called "SM Net." In every issue of that magazine, I write a column on bondage titled "Dear Editor, this is Nureki Chimuo, Bondage Specialist."

Attached to each installment of my column is a photograph by Sachi Yamanouchi.

And as you are well aware, the model in all of these photos is none other than you, Fuyuki-san.

I really love this photograph of you taken by Yamanouchi-san.

To be honest, I actually feel a sense of revulsion toward photos of naked women with their legs spread wide apart and covered in tangled ropes, but looking at this photograph taken by Yamanouchi gives me an erection.

(The reaction of a rope fetishist is simple, obvious, and almost embarrassing.)

The reason I love this photo is that Yamanouchi has naturally acquired, without being taught by anyone, the most crucial sensibility for a bondage photographer. The ability to enter the inner universe of the bound woman and press the shutter.

This is a style of photography that old-school professional photographers, who can only see a bound model as a mere subject, simply cannot imitate.

I'm completely clueless about technology (I don't even own a cell phone, let alone a computer), and I know absolutely nothing about camera mechanics or technical aspects, so I can't really explain this part well. It's a shame I can only put it this way.

While holding the camera, Yamanouchi-san's spirit enters the mind of the bound woman, and he becomes one with her.

I may not understand the technical aspects of the camera as a machine, but I fully understand the photographer's feelings at the moment the shutter is released.

By penetrating the mind of the bound woman and assimilating both the pain and pleasure of the ropes into his own senses, photographer Yamanouchi sensitively perceives the model's subtle physical and mental movements and reactions.

That is why she, Fuyuki-san, is able to take excellent bondage photos without missing your exquisite, fleeting shutter opportunities.

A photographer who can only capture the model's superficial pain or pleasure cannot reach the depths of the model's soul.

How could a photographer who cannot personally experience the bound woman's pleasure and sweet pain possibly take good bondage photos?

I wonder how photographer Sachi Yamanouchi will capture, in that captivating space where she lives and breathes, Fuyuki-san's new beauty of masochism, that sensuous beauty that responds so flexibly, in such a tantalizing way.

It's been a while, but I'm getting chills.

Fuyuki-san, the day of the shoot is drawing nearer by the minute.

How are you feeling right now?

Oh dear, ever since last time, I'd intended to write about the characters in this "Talking Theater," especially the members of "Tomoshi-bi-za," without using honorifics, yet somehow I've ended up using them this time.

No matter how close a relationship I have with someone, I simply cannot address others, especially women, without honorifics.

No matter how much I bind a woman, I am, after all, a feminist.

2011.3.28

濡木痴夢男のおしゃべり芝居 第百五十六回

Nureki Chimuo's Talking Theater Chapter 156

早乙女宏美の新写真集

Hiromi Saotome's New Photo Book

I write a regular column titled “Dear Editor, This is Nureki Chimuo, Bondage Specialist” for every issue of “SM Net,” a magazine published by Sunny Publishing.

In the seventeenth installment, I wrote an article titled “I’m Going to Create a True Bondage Photo Book!”

Immediately after reading it, I received a reply via fax from Sachi Yamanouchi.

It was a deeply appreciated response, filled with such sincere passion that it truly moved me. I was convinced that my feelings had been fully conveyed to Photographer Yamanouchi.

I felt glad that I had created “Tomoshi-bi-za.”

Moved by this, I immediately wrote another letter to photographer Yamanouchi, expressing my honest feelings at that moment and the following statement of resolve.

Sachi-san.

Thank you for sending me a letter that has put me in the best possible mood and motivated me. I really appreciate it.

That’s right.

Just as you said, that piece of writing of mine was indeed the first declaration of intent marking the launch of “Tomoshi-bi-za.”

You wrote that you thought choosing me for the first installment was very fitting and that I was grateful for it, which gave me even more momentum.

I will now write down my mindset for the photo shoot of the new bondage photo book featuring Hiromi Saotome, jotting down my thoughts as they come to me, in no particular order.

Please read it.

As we all discussed before, let's borrow that room at Sachi's house for the shoot.

If we use a rental studio or something like that, the superficial lies will stand out, and we simply can't take good bondage photos anymore.

Just being in a studio weakens the creator's sense of tension, and no matter how good the bondage is, it gets tainted by the atmosphere of a "job" that has already become routine.

Sachi's room is, without flattery, wonderful. Even the color of the air exudes a sense of realism.

It's also nice to see that abnormally fat cat strolling around at people's feet without a hint of fear.

I've heard that another photographer has already used that house several times for other photo shoots.

Sachi-san mentioned that she'll have to be careful not to end up with the same photos and background as those previous shoots, which could create a similar vibe, but please rest assured.

I, no, Hiromi Saotome and I, will create a uniquely rich atmosphere in that room that no other photographer could achieve.

I'll create such a dramatic transformation that you, waking up in that room, (Huh? Where am I?) will be genuinely surprised.

And once you step into that room and sit in front of that pillar, Saotome will change completely, too.

If the mood of Hiromi herself, the subject, changes, the mood of Hiromi captured by the lens will naturally change as well. A Hiromi you've never seen before will stir mysteriously within the lens.

Sachi-san, all you have to do is capture that fleeting moment of transformation without missing it.

No, let's stop with all this pretentious, abstract talk about "capturing change."

Saotome's transformation is her eroticism. It is Hiromi Saotome's unique masochistic eroticism, something no other model can convey.

Capturing that is our greatest mission for this shoot.

I've been tying Saotome up on set for quite some time now. I've worked with her on countless occasions, magazines, videos, movies, and have crossed paths with her on sets all over the place.

But back then, for me, and for Saotome, it was ultimately just a job to make money.

No matter how convincingly I acted, it was ultimately just a job to earn a living.

People who aren't enthusiasts themselves create and sell products aimed at enthusiasts for profit, and both Saotome and I have been used for and served that purpose. Of course, since we're being paid, I'm grateful for that, and I certainly have no right to complain.

But I feel that, before we knew it, and Saotome too, we had somehow worn ourselves down without even realizing it.

Speaking for ourselves, both those who tied and those who are tied had developed a sort of inertia. It was enough just to go through the motions of tying, or being tied...

That is precisely why, for this photo book, I am focusing my mind and giving it my all...

No, writing it like this might worry Saotome.

She might worry that this shoot is going to turn out terribly rough...

She might even worry that we're going to start something like a "Cruel Torture Endurance Contest."

That won't happen, that won't happen, Saotome.

There's no way I'd do something so tasteless.

For this photo book, I intend to return to the sensibility of my Uramado days and fill it with nothing but deeply lyrical, emotionally charged bondage photos.

Oh?

The text I was supposed to be writing for photographer Sachi has, before I knew it, started feeling like I'm addressing Hiromi Saotome.

My apologies. Sorry.

There's a reason for this.

Actually, while I was writing this Talking Theater, a letter from Hiromi Saotome arrived via Fax, reading "I read your manuscript on SM Net."

Since the letter expressed such heartfelt emotions, I paused my writing and couldn't help but read it.

"...Over the past few years, I've noticed that my stamina and muscle strength have started to decline..."

That heartbreaking confession struck a chord deep within me.

And so, before I knew it, my heart had turned toward Saotome.

So, from here on out, this will become a personal request from me to photographer Sachi, Hiromi Saotome, and one more person, Nakahara Rutsu, the producer of this shoot, in other words, to all my comrades at "Tomoshi-bi-za."

As always, please forgive any disjointedness in the flow of this text.

Hiromi, rest assured. A woman's true charm lies in what lies ahead.

From the moment you begin to worry that your stamina and muscle strength are waning, the eroticism of a woman's body, especially the eroticism of a woman who enjoys being bound with rope, ripens all the more mysteriously, gaining a lustrous glow.

You say it's too painful to tie yourself up and hang upside down from the ceiling anymore, but that sort of thing isn't SM. It's nothing more than acrobatics completely unrelated to bondage.

Ever since Saotome started performing that sort of thing on stage, I've been telling her to her face, "What's so fun about doing something like that?" and I've kept saying that.

Of course, Saotome herself understands why I keep badmouthing her. She can't say it out loud because she's not in a position to speak plainly, but ultimately, it's just that she has to do it for the money.

Saotome. Rest assured.

There won't be any suspension in the upcoming "Tomoshi-bi-za" photo book. Of course, there won't be any upside-down suspension either.

I absolutely won't do anything like a "Cruel Torture Endurance Contest." Saotome should have known long ago that I detest that sort of thing.

The reason I don't do that sort of thing is because there is no eroticism in it.

No, I suppose there are people who only feel eroticism in that sort of thing. But for bondage enthusiasts like us, it's a type of thing we simply cannot accept.

Well, at the beginning of this piece, I warned you that I'd be writing about this shoot in no particular order, just as the thoughts came to me, and that's exactly how it turned out. My Talking Theater never seems to stay on track.

Since this particular tangent looks like it's going to be a long, winding one, I'll take a break here for now.

2011.4.1

濡木痴夢男のおしゃべり芝居 第百五十七回

Nureki Chimuo's Talking Theater Chapter 157

「ともしび座」から「ともしび」へ

From “Tomoshibi-za” to “Tomoshibi”¹⁷

Continuing from my previous post, I'll write about the preparations for the photo shoot for “Hiromi Saotome's New Photo Book.”

This text is less intended for Hiromi Saotome, photographer Yamanouchi, and producer Nakahara, who will be participating in this shoot, and more of a personal reminder for myself.

I have a tendency to be impatient, short-sighted, and scatterbrained in everything I do, and I easily get sidetracked, so I'm writing this as a reminder to myself.

This is a memo to firmly engrave the theme of this photo shoot in my mind once again and to keep myself from straying onto side paths or detours.

For this shoot, only the four of us, model Hiromi Saotome, photographer Sachi Yamanouchi, producer Nakahara Rutsu, and myself, will be locked away in a room at the Yamanouchi residence. No additional staff will be present.

As I will explain later, this has significant meaning.

I'll say it again. I'm an extremely scatterbrained person (and I've lost count of how many times Director Nakahara has scolded me for it). Whenever I meet someone who shares my tastes and clicks with me, I say “I'm going to put my heart and soul into this shoot, so it's going to be really interesting. Why don't you come watch? Help out as part of the staff.” I can't help but blurt out smooth talk like that.

Having more staff members means they can handle the various odd jobs that come up on set, which makes things easier for me both mentally and physically. However, that very ease tends to diminish the overall sense of tension.

For this shoot, we must eliminate any elements that might lead to a lack of tension. Therefore, I will not permit the participation of such temporary staff.

¹⁷ Tomoshibi means lamplight.

If even a single onlooker is nearby, the intensity of the shoot diminishes and the model's concentration is disrupted.

It's not just the model. Simply having spectators around makes my own sense of urgency wane, and my rope work becomes slack.

Essentially, sadly, I end up getting into a mindset and performing rope work that is meant to be shown to the spectators.

It's a habit I've had for years.

Come to think of it, I've always been doing bondage just to show off to someone. I am, after all, just a service provider doing the grunt work.

But for this shoot, I want to break away from that position, even just a little.

And I want Saotome to rid her mind of the habits and inertia she's accumulated as a professional model.

She must break free from this past professional mindset, that she gets paid just for getting naked and posing as the photographer tells her, or that she gets paid just for silently letting herself be tied up.

Thankfully, right now, Saotome is already feeling that way on her own.

You could say that the three of us, Yamanouchi, Nakahara, and I, have jumped on board with that sentiment.

Now, more than ever, Saotome must lay bare her true feelings as a rope enthusiast. We want her to show us the unique nature of her sexual desires.

If we cannot see that form, this shoot will have no meaning or significance.

To use an old expression, the four of us are "friends who share our innermost thoughts."

We breathe in the same "world," and we are friends who have opened up to each other to the very depths of our hearts and formed a deep bond.

Now that we have gathered here under this project and are burning with passion, I cannot help but feel that there is a fateful inevitability to it.

It truly feels as though the time is ripe.

That said, aside from me, the other three, Saotome, Yamanouchi, and Nakahara, each have demanding jobs and are busy every day. They must lead lives even busier than those of ordinary people.

Although we stay in close contact, opportunities for all four of us to actually meet face-to-face and talk are surprisingly rare.

Yet, as it happens, yesterday everything went smoothly, and we were able to meet up perfectly, as if by some miracle.

As for what exactly constitutes a miracle and where the miracle lies, explaining that would be quite substantial and interesting in itself, but since it would likely become a lengthy story, I'll omit it.

At yesterday's gathering, in addition to the four of us, another person joined us. Mr. T. Takashi, our precious comrade and irreplaceable old friend.

Mr. T. Takashi is also a "soulmate" with whom I've shared a long history and a deep bond of trust.

However, as he holds a position of responsibility and leads a busy daily life, we rarely get to meet.

That being the case, opportunities for the five of us, including Mr. T. Takashi, to gather around a single table, free from any need to be considerate of other ordinary people, and to chat and converse freely and comfortably are quite rare.

Although Mr. T. Takashi finds it difficult to attend events like photo shoots due to his busy schedule, he is an important member of our newly formed group, so much so that it feels as though he was destined to be part of it from the very beginning, even without being formally invited.

There is a special joy in seeing these five of us come together and talk freely and spontaneously, losing track of time.

Yesterday, the five of us miraculously managed to escape from the bothersome crowd of ordinary people and get together, so the atmosphere was twice as lively and enjoyable as usual.

That's right.

We decided last night that removing the word "za" from our group name, "Tomishibi-za," and keeping just "Tomishibi" would make it sound cleaner and better, and everyone agreed, so we settled on that.

“Putting ‘za’ in there makes it sound like a theater troupe, and it feels a bit off,” said both Nakahara-san and Yamanouchi-san quite emphatically.

As someone who has always loved theater, I had arbitrarily tacked “za” onto “Tomoshihi” myself, hoping to at least immerse myself in the enchanting atmosphere of a theater troupe, if only for the sake of the mood.

The unyielding childishness of an 81-year old.

But if those two scary older ladies say so, I won’t insist on it.

Whether it’s “Tomoshihi-za” or just “Tomoshihi,” I’m fine with either.

After all, I was the one who first suggested we name the group “Tomoshihi” in the first place.

“When naming groups like this, there’s a tendency to string together all sorts of eerie, flashy words to try to look intimidating. I hate that kind of hype. It feels like it lays the creators’ true intentions bare. Even with videos or photo books, people try to grab customers’ attention by slapping on overly pretentious, grandiose, yet hollow titles, I think that backfires. Let’s go with a name for our group that’s as understated, unobtrusive, and unassuming as possible. Something light and breezy. For example, ‘Tomoshihi’ or something like that.”

When I said that, Director Nakahara Rutsu, who was standing nearby, immediately chimed in, “Oh, that’s great! Tomoshihi! That’s perfect! In hiragana: Tomoshihi! (ともしひ)” and jumped right on board.

So, although we initially intended to go with “Tomoshihi,” I started thinking that “Tomoshihi” alone sounded a bit like a haiku or tanka magazine. So on my own initiative, I added “za” to it and established it as “Tomoshihi-za” within this Talking Theater.

However, at last night’s gathering of our comrades, we went back to “Tomoshihi,” and it was decided that this would be the final name. I have no objection.

The new bondage photo book featuring Hiromi Saotome as the model holds experimental or commemorative significance for the formation of “Tomoshihi.”

If this experiment yields a result I’m satisfied with, I intend to immediately begin work on a video or photo book featuring Fuyuki Sawato.

So, Fuyuki, please wait just a little longer.

Oh, it seems I've gone off on a tangent again. I was supposed to be writing about something else entirely. I was going to list specific guidelines for everyone on set and use that to get everyone in the right mood for the day.

But, oh well.

Let's just say it's fine.

So, last night, our close-knit group of five got together. While drinking beer and wine and having a lively and boisterous time, we ended up setting the date for the shoot.

We're going to create a photo book so wonderful that Hiromi Saotome will cry with joy, thinking, "I'm so glad to be alive."

I'm confident we can do this.

I haven't aged for nothing.

That's right. Even if I'm past my prime, I'm still Nureki Chimuo.

If I didn't have a winning strategy, I wouldn't have started "Tomoshibi" in the first place.

2011.4.8

濡木痴夢男のおしゃべり芝居 第百五十八回

Nureki Chimuo's Talking Theater Chapter 158

絵物語ふうの写真を撮るぞ

Let's Take Some Photos that Look Like a Picture Story

I had resolved to take a deep breath, pull myself together, and get down to business, but when producer Nakahara called me out on it, I realized my resolve was, after all, rather naive.

The “habit” cultivated over such a long time is a frightening thing.

Habit has a way of flowing toward the lowest, easiest path.

In other words, it is decadence.

What makes it so terrifying is that I don't even realize it myself.

By the time I do realize it, I'm already sitting cross-legged at the bottom, feeling smug and content in my complacency.

As an experiment prior to the launch of the “Tomoshibi” group, we planned to create a new photo book featuring Hiromi Saotome as the model.

In my mindset leading up to that shoot, there was, as expected, that complacent comfort I had settled into.

I looked up the word “comfort” (anju) in the Obunsha Japanese Dictionary that I always keep close at hand.

The first definition of “anju” is “to live in peace and security,” but the second is “to be satisfied at a certain stage without aspiring to higher things.”

It was this second definition of “anju” that producer Nakahara Rutsu called me out on and pressed me regarding my mindset for this upcoming shoot.

I believed that if I tied up Saotome with all my might while producer Rutsu watched me intently with her large, gleaming eyes, and if photographer Yamanouchi captured that moment with his delicate sensibility, a fine photo book would naturally come together without much effort.

I believed that if the unwavering will of four people, all facing the same direction, were to be locked away in a single room, come together, and burn with single-minded intensity, that alone would produce a bondage photo book of a kind never seen before, one that would be truly satisfying.

“Isn’t that thinking a bit naive?” producer Rutsu asked, her huge eyes fixed on me.

“Let’s not take photos where there’s no setting, no story, just a man holding rope for no reason and tying up a woman. Come on, Sensei, Nureki Sensei, it doesn’t matter if it’s cliché, old-fashioned, or run of the mill, let’s create some kind of story and take photos that fit that situation. You know, like those fun photos from the Uramado era that Minomura Ko and Nureki Sensei took so often. The ones with that narrative depth hidden in the background...”

The phrasing is different, and the nuances of the words vary slightly, but this is the gist of what she was passionately pleading with me.

Overwhelmed by her intensity, I was left at a loss.

“Yeah, you’re right.” I couldn’t help but nod in agreement.

To be honest, what I had planned for this shoot was simply a man (that is, me) holding a rope with no particular meaning or purpose, and tying up a woman (that is, Hiromi Saotome) with practiced ease.

I intended to put more energy into my rope work than usual to showcase my skills, and then wrap up the shoot.

After that, I could just leave it up to Saotome’s reactions and photographer Yamanouchi’s shooting technique...

But producer Nakahara says that won’t do.

If we do that, the result will be no different from the quality of the photo books and videos currently flooding the market.

Just because I have a slight edge in rope handling, how much value does that really add to the work?

A man appears for no reason, ties a woman up with rope, and the woman, again without any explanation, meekly and silently allows herself to be bound by him.

The ease with which it ends, with the woman striking a dreamy expression, without any buildup or justification leading up to that moment. The inherent appeal of SM has vanished here.

Producer Rutsu had long been tilting his head in dissatisfaction regarding this superficiality. That dissatisfaction is one and the same as the genuine, unadulterated desires of bondage enthusiasts with sincere hearts.

That is precisely why we must not repeat the same mistakes during the filming of “Tomoshibi.” We must not disappoint true bondage enthusiasts.

I was moved by producer Rutsu’s passion.

In fact, I feel a certain degree of responsibility for the state of society where such facile photos and videos are allowed to prevail (though they have become much rarer).

I constantly feel in my heart that it was actually me, Nureki Chimuo, who first demonstrated this kind of easy, low-effort, low-cost footage, where a man ties a woman up with rope for no reason or necessity, the woman offers no resistance and submits meekly, and then, as expected, looks entranced.

My low budget bondage videos were sold in large quantities and turned a profit for a time over a decade ago, riding the wave of commercialism.

(To be honest, back then I once starred in three titles of that “Introduction to Bondage” type of video in a single day. This was an era when each title was thirty minutes long.)

It has been quite some time since bondage videos that merely demonstrate tying techniques were abandoned by commercial interests.

Yet, I hear rumors that even now, the mere shell of the genre remains, and new works occasionally appear on the market.

That’s why... yes, precisely for that reason, I must wholeheartedly heed producer Rutsu’s advice at this point.

I must thank her and tell her, “You were right to say that.”

No, actually, I already thanked her when we parted ways that day.

“Thank you. Speaking up like that is part of your job as a producer. You did the right thing. If you hadn’t said anything, I would have tried to get by with some cheap, superficial tricks again. Thank you. I’m grateful.”

Saying that, I bowed my head, opened the door to the Sex Industry Museum, stepped out into the lobby, and pressed the button for the elevator to go from the fifth floor to the first.

Well, for these reasons, my inner self has now strangely tightened up, and I've started thinking up the most down-to-earth, picture book-style cliched story.

Based on the interesting SM story I wrote about at length in the old Uramado, I'll develop a scene where I attack Saotome, tie her up, and torment her in a lewd, relentless manner.

Somehow, I'm starting to feel excited.

Come to think of it, creating that kind of graphic novel is the field of work I'm best at.

2011.4.9

濡木痴夢男のおしゃべり芝居 第百五十九回

Nureki Chimuo's Talking Theater Chapter 159

山之内邸の柱

The Pillars of the Yamanouchi Residence

I received a letter in an envelope from Fuyuki Sawato.

As always, it was a handwritten letter with a heartfelt message, written in elegant, meticulous regular script.

From the very first line, I could sense her emotions and determination, and I couldn't help but sit up straight and spread the letter out neatly on my desk to read it.

I must admit that I am, in fact, half-despairing at the state of the world today, where sincere desires, those that groan from the depths of the human heart, such as SM and bondage, have been reduced to something akin to a frivolous game, almost trivialized.

However, whenever I come across the earnest words in Fuyuki-san's letter, I feel that there is still no need to despair.

Fuyuki-san's letter serves as a valuable historical record of the true feelings of women (known as M-type) who are living their lives earnestly in the present.

Therefore, with her permission, I am sharing her letter to me here.

Excluding personal details, I have transcribed only the soulful, heartfelt portion of one woman's message.

As always, whenever I write a letter to you, Sensei, a unique feeling washes over me.

It's as if time flows more slowly in that moment, as if I'm enveloped in a warm, gentle air, and as if an otherworldly atmosphere fills the air around me, it makes me feel truly pampered.

(Omitted) I was so, so happy that you reached out to me this time.

Around the time of the filming of “Hostage” last year, no, even before that, I had begun to think back often to the day I first met you.

As I have said countless times before, I wanted to meet you even if just for a moment, to exchange even a simple greeting, and if I were to be so bold as to ask for a luxury, to touch your hand... There was absolutely no ulterior motive behind those feelings.

It never even crossed my mind that I might become a model. It wasn't a matter of liking or disliking the idea. It simply never occurred to me.

After various events, and ever since I began interacting with you as a model, my distaste for those who handle rope casually has only deepened. Now, I am no longer able to enjoy rope with anyone other than you.

So, the fact that you reached out to me like this truly makes me very happy.

When I received the email from Yamanouchi-san this time, I was so overjoyed that tears welled up in the corners of my eyes.

Once again, thank you very much for reaching out to me.

I'm also very much looking forward to visiting the Yamanouchi residence, which will serve as the location for the shoot.

There's a limit to how much I can expand my imagination in a standard rental studio, but I wonder why that is.

It seems that the imagination of a place where one can feel human warmth and where nature exists is truly boundless.

Come to think of it, since a studio is not a product of nature itself, perhaps it's only natural that it cannot produce natural-looking work.

Everything in it, the objects, the smells, the light, even the tiniest sounds, and the very air itself.

Especially when someone like me touches the rope, what I perceive through my sixth sense, not just my five, is incredibly profound.

I imagine the Yamanouchi residence must be a truly wonderful place.

Having long resonated with and been captivated by your values and sensibilities, I believe in its magnificence unconditionally.

I'm really looking forward to it.

I'm really, really, really looking forward to it! (laughs)

I look forward to seeing you on the day.

This letter is a lovely one that candidly expresses Fuyuki-san's expectations for the piece our Tomoshibi group will be creating this time.

It really motivates us. This is where we differ greatly from professional models who work solely for the pay.

It was the first time a model had shared their thoughts on the shooting location so thoughtfully and candidly.

Even for someone like me, who's been in this business for so long that moss has practically grown on my back, this is a first.

When shooting in a conventional studio, there are limits to how much a model can expand their imagination.

The objects, the smells, the light, the sounds, even the air, in a studio are all just studio elements.

It feels somewhat unnatural. You can't sense human warmth.

"Especially when someone like me touches the rope, what I perceive through my sixth sense, not just my five, is incredibly profound...." Fuyuki-san wrote this, and I thought, "That makes sense."

The five senses, needless to say, refer to sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch.

The organs that enable these are the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and skin. However, for someone like Fuyuki-san, who can associate special emotions, dreams, and sensuality with rope, she possesses a keen sense that goes beyond these five organs and five senses.

The next time you are bound by me at the Yamanouchi residence, I believe your sixth sense will be further sharpened and awakened, allowing you to feel

deeply and intensely, and to display a dazzling radiance emanating from your entire body.

When you actually come into contact with the shape, color, and scent of those pillars at the Yamanouchi residence, and the atmosphere surrounding them, your body and mind will be enveloped not just by your sixth sense. No, by a sensation beyond the sixth sense, a sensuality that might be called a seventh sense, and by a profound allure.

Silent pillars standing there, imbued with a longing for the beauty of masochism.

Come to think of it, the pleasure of bondage, that elusive thing that cannot be conveyed to a third party, lurks in the deepest, shadowy recesses of that sixth sense, or rather, that seventh sense. No matter how much you try to explain it to someone who lacks this sensation, they will never understand.

(Even without possessing that sixth or seventh sense, if one manipulates the ropes in a plausible manner, one can mimic the surface appearance. So, it seems there are quite a few people nowadays who merely imitate the form and call themselves “enthusiasts,” but they have nothing to do with me.)

Your aversion toward those who casually dabble in rope is only growing deeper. I can relate.

Those who cherish rope are my true comrades.

I also found your thoughts on the studio very interesting. Please write again.

2011.4.18

濡木痴夢男のおしゃべり芝居 第百六十回

Nureki Chimuo's Talking Theater Chapter 160

撮影まであと十日

Ten Days Until Shooting

Production notes for Hiromi Saotome's upcoming new photo book.

There's a model, a man appears, and without any explanation or foreshadowing, he ties her up with rope, makes her strike various poses, and when the time comes, he unties her. Then, for some reason, the model starts crying and clings to the man, and finally, she lets all the tension drain from her body and lies limply within the ropes. A simple, formulaic performance that has become so routine it lacks any novelty or excitement. (Ah, to be honest, the very person who first pioneered this kind of staged bondage, and who has mindlessly repeated the same thing over and over again in hundreds of video titles, is none other than myself, Nureki Chimuo!) I had to find a way to break free from this. I had to take interesting sequential photos like those from the old Uramado era. After discussing this repeatedly with producer Nakahara Rutsu, I finally made up my mind.

Unlike simple, formulaic bondage shows, taking photos with a narrative requires several times the energy.

I falter and hesitate.

But I had already declared my resolve in front of producer Rutsu.

I have no choice but to do it.

From here on out, I'll write down notes for the shoot as they come to mind, without any particular order.

They are, quite literally, just notes.

According to the Obunsha Japanese Dictionary, "memo" is an abbreviation of "memorandum."

"Writing down only the main points so as not to forget them. A written reminder."

That is what it is.

I'll simply string together whatever comes to mind, just as the inspiration strikes.

I'll write plenty of useless, superfluous things, too.

Photographer Sachi Yamanouchi.

Please find the inspiration for the moment you press the shutter from these notes.

Location: A cramped room in a cheap apartment.

There is a shabby tatami-mat room, and a single pillar stands at the boundary between the room and the hallway leading to the entrance.

A woman named Hiromi (played by Hiromi Saotome) and a man named Tamaru (played by Nureki Chimuo) are sitting across from each other.

The atmosphere is tense and unsettling.

Tamaru's Lines (Since this is a still photograph, naturally there are no lines and none can be heard. However, to bring the man's posture and Hiromi's posture and expression to life, I have written the lines here. Hiromi's movements and expressions change in response to the threats and obscene remarks spewed from the man's mouth.)

"Listen, honey, now that we've come this far, I'm going to be blunt.

There are all kinds of loan sharks in town, but I'm not bragging. There's probably no one else out there as shady as us.

You don't need to look so scared.

Just because you can't pay us back doesn't mean we're going to take your life.

Still, your husband's gambling addiction is pretty bad, isn't it?

Horse racing, bicycle racing, pachinko, he dabbles in everything, and he just keeps losing.

Your husband just doesn't have a knack for gambling.

Even though he has no talent for it, he's crazy about gambling.

I was a fool to lend a guy like that 1.5 million yen, but there's no point in saying that now.

I hear he left home without telling you, his wife, and hasn't come back for three months now?

Hmm, I wonder where the hell he's hiding.

But I can't just leave things like this.

Could you tell me where he's hiding?

Well, even if I find out where he's hiding, it's all for nothing anyway.

But I can't just give up, you know."

Since this isn't video footage, the man's words naturally don't appear in the photograph. Anyone looking at the photograph alone wouldn't know.

However, if the man (that is, me) gets into the mood and utters lines like this the moment shooting begins, not only Saotome but everyone present, though that's just photographer Sachi and producer Rutsu, will find their hearts immersed in a single atmosphere.

And seeing Hiromi's pitiful expression and body language as she's threatened by the man, photographer Sachi might start snapping photos right away.

When the photographer presses the shutter, he doesn't need to call out to Hiromi or Tamaru in the scene.

I want him to just keep snapping away whenever he feels the moment is right.

The next lines and actions of this loan shark, Tamaru.

"Even if I told you to tell me where your husband is hiding, you'd just play dumb and not tell me anyway.

So I'm going to wait here for your husband.

If I wait in this house, he'll come back eventually.

After all, it seems he's got a crush on you.

When he gets back, I'll grab him right there. Then, I'm sorry to say, I'll make sure you can't move from here.

If you get away, I'll lose all my leads."

Tamaru suddenly grabbed one of Hiromi's wrists and twisted it behind her back.

At the same time, he took out the rope he had hidden and tied it around her wrist.

From here on, the sequence follows the usual bondage routine between Nureki and Saotome, but be mindful of the photographer's shutter speed and adjust your movements accordingly to ensure they are effective.

Tamaru and Hiromi will need to move while accounting for the differences between video and still photography, but if you focus too much on that, the work will lack realism, so let's all be careful about this.

If the photos end up looking formulaic, it defeats the whole purpose of us forming "Tomoshibi."

However, since both Nureki and Saotome are well-accustomed to this balance between acting with a sense of speed and maintaining realism from their numerous shoots so far, I'm actually not too worried.

If, by any chance, the photographer misses a shot, just say casually and without hesitation, "Ah, could you do that part again?" Both Saotome and I will repeat it immediately.

Repeating it is a simple matter.

However, when repeating the same movement, let's follow the photographer's instructions with the utmost care so as not to lose the sense of realism.

Let's proceed with the shoot as naturally as possible.

Let's all be careful to absolutely avoid taking those cheap, staged photos where you can almost hear the photographer barking orders at the model, "Look that way, look this way, lift your chin, lower your chin, furrow your brows, make a sad face!"

Let's engrave this in our hearts. Photos where you can only sense the photographer's voice giving instructions are the absolute worst kind of bondage photography.

In particular, producer Rutsu, please position yourself where you can oversee the entire proceedings, keep a watchful eye on everything, and observe with a sense of vigilance.

Our work can easily become superficial if we're not careful. If we let our guard down, we'll quickly fall into a rut and end up in the worst possible situation. Stagnation.

(Come to think of it, I feel as though my very existence is already a cliché, and that everything I do has become stagnant.)

To be honest, the reason I recently asked photographer Kyoichi Tsuzuki, through Chikuma Shobo, to take photos of my workroom, which I usually keep a secret, was precisely because I wanted to break out of that rut.

And it was this photo book, taken on that occasion and personally edited and bound by Photographer Tsuzuki himself, that served as the catalyst for the decision to photograph the members of Tomoshibi this time.

As mentioned earlier, Hiromi Saotome has also seen the photo book "Tabata Hojoki," which features my workroom and myself.

"This is great! I'd love to make something like this!" Saotome exclaimed enthusiastically.

At this point, even without me explaining the details of this shoot to her again, my feelings and my intentions should already be clear to her.

I have also written about my resolve for this project and my feelings toward Saotome in the magazine "SM Net" (Sunny Publishing).

I want Saotome to cast aside her stage name, Hiromi Saotome, and let herself be bound by my ropes.

And I want her to react honestly to my ropes. That is all. Acting is completely unnecessary.

This shoot is taking place at the Yamanouchi residence, and including Saotome, there are only four of us gathered here.

Moreover, we are close comrades who know each other well, with no lies or secrets between us. There won't be a single unnecessary staff member present.

Come to think of it, having four people, each possessing a secret nature that wouldn't be accepted in the outside world, gathered in a single room to spend several hours together is likely a once-in-a-lifetime occurrence.

Let's lay bare our true feelings to one another in front of Sachi Yamanouchi's camera.

The shoot is just ten days away.

If we're struck by a massive earthquake during the shoot that day, the four of us will die right there together.

"I'd be perfectly content with that," I said, but the other three broke into complicated, subtle smiles, exchanged glances, tilted their heads in unison, saying "Hmm, that's a bit much..." (laughs)

2011.4.19

濡木痴夢男のおしゃべり芝居 第百六十一回

Nureki Chimuo's Talking Theater Chapter 161

撮影まであと九日

Nine Days Until Shooting

Producer Nakahara Rutsu, who had read through the script for the previous "Talking Theater," called me right away.

We discussed a few things regarding the direction for the upcoming shoot.

As usual, she made some sharp observations.

"...It would be great if we could incorporate the psychological aspects of SM, something Nureki Sensei excels at and that only he can capture. Let's create a photo book that's even more stimulating than video footage, one that evokes the subtle excitement of an enthusiast's psyche."

There's a man who loves to tie people up, and a woman who loves to be tied up, so he takes out his rope and ties her up, and she feels good being tied up and becomes intoxicated. The psychology of SM pleasure isn't quite that simple and straightforward, is it?

I don't think today's enthusiasts would feel anything looking at such bland, shallow bondage photos...

And then producer Rutsu says something harsh.

No matter how intense the acrobatic bondage may be, it's ultimately just a superficial spectacle, utterly disconnected from the subtleties of the SM psyche or the pleasure it entails...

I understand what she's getting at. It's something we've discussed several times before, whenever the occasion arose.

"...Precisely because still photographs don't include dialogue, they should be able to create stimulating bondage images through imagination and fantasy. Anything that doesn't evoke fantasy and imagination isn't true bondage photography. It is precisely because these photographs are silent that they demonstrate such eloquent expressiveness."

Whispering to Hiromi (Hiromi Saotome), who is bound with her hands behind her back and chained to a pillar, the loan shark Tamaru (Nureki Chimuo) says:

"...Ma'am, your husband's taking his time coming home, isn't he? You must be hungry. I'll grab a bento from the convenience store down the street, and we'll eat it together. I know, I know, I'll untie you when it's time to eat. Well then, I'll be right back, so just wait here quietly. Oops, it'd be a hassle if you started shouting, so I'd better put a gag on you..."

Tamaru puts a gag in Hiromi's mouth.

"...While I'm at it, I might as well tie up your legs too. I wouldn't want you to run away."

Tamaru ties up Hiromi's legs as well.

(If I were to write out every little detail of this scene, there'd be no end to it, so I'll leave it to my inspiration on the day of the shoot.)

A scene where Hiromi is untied and eats her lunch. (Hiromi has no appetite. She places her lunch on her lap and looks down pitifully.)

Tamaru takes the rope again and tries to tie Hiromi up.

Hiromi resigns herself to her fate, slumps her shoulders, and puts her hands behind her back of her own accord.

Tamaru licks his lips as he ties the rope around the unresisting Hiromi.

(This is where the pleasure lies for those watching a bondage scene. You could say it's the crucial point that gets the viewer aroused. That point lies in the movements of my fingers as I manipulate the rope and in Saotome's physical reactions. The camera angles are also important. Cameraman Sachi Yamanouchi, please keep this in mind. If you come up with any ideas on set, don't hesitate to speak up. Whether those ideas work out or not, Saotome and I will do exactly as you say right away. Saotome is a veteran with great expressiveness, so I

have a feeling she'll be able to portray the pitifulness of an obedient woman being bound without resistance, just as intended.)

Seeing Hiromi resign herself to her fate and submit to being bound, Tamaru feels a twinge of sympathy for her.

But since he can't let her escape, he ties the ropes carefully and securely.

Hiromi's expression is resigned. Yet she also harbors a secret desire to flee at the first opportunity. She's also determined to find a way to trick this man and make her escape.

To reiterate, press the shutter while being conscious that the viewer's peak of SM pleasure lies in the expression and body movements of a woman who has given up and resigned herself to her fate.

I'll say this over and over again. No matter how wide a bound woman's legs are spread or what foreign objects are inserted into her, bondage enthusiasts do not feel as much pleasure as the creator imagines.

To photographer Sachi.

Even when Hiromi is tied up, I think it's best to keep Tamaru's body out of the frame as much as possible.

If you include a man's body in the photo, it becomes distracting, and the focus of the bondage pleasure inevitably gets lost.

It's okay to include just her arms or hands, though.

I just suddenly thought of a title for this photo book.

"Woman and the Pillar." No, maybe "Pillar and the Woman" would be better. Or maybe I should just go with "Pillar." I really don't want to use one of those overly eerie, hollow-sounding titles.

That's the epitome of formulaic boredom.

I feel like titles like that only end up being a negative.

2011.4.20

濡木痴夢男のおしゃべり芝居 第百六十二回

Nureki Chimuo's Talking Theater Chapter 162

撮影まであと八日

Eight Days Until Shooting

“Hey, what’s up? Aren’t you going to eat your lunch? Aren’t you hungry?”

Hmm. And I went out of my way to buy it for you.

Oh, I see. So you’re saying you don’t want to eat with a guy like me.

Well, I guess that makes sense.

It wouldn’t taste good anyway, eating a bento in a situation like this.

If you don’t want to eat it, then don’t. Skipping a meal or two won’t kill you, after all.

Well then, sorry about this, but I’m going to have to tie you up again.”

(Tamaru grabs the bento from Hiromi’s lap and puts it away.)

“Now, put your hands behind your back. That’s right, I’m tying you up again. If you run away, it’ll be a problem for me.

If you run away, I’ll lose my only lead on getting back the 1.5 million yen I lent your husband.

Good, good, you’re being cooperative. Oh, what lovely wrists. That’s right, being cooperative is the best trait a person can have. To tie up such lovely wrists... what a terrible person I am, hehehe...

It’s okay. I’ll tie you up so it doesn’t hurt. See? How’s that? Doesn’t hurt, does it?

But you know, when I tie you up like this, you look so cute and pretty... hehehe...”

By the way, why is this guy, Tamaru, tying Hiromi up like this and chaining her to a pillar?

Even for a vicious loan shark, isn't it a bit too much to barge into someone's home, tie up his wife with rope, and take her hostage?

Isn't tying her up so she can't escape just an excuse? Couldn't it be that he's actually a man who just enjoys tying women up like this?

That's right. This guy is the kind of man who likes to tie women up.

That's why he just strolls right into someone else's house like this, ties up his wife, and sits there munching on his lunch box.

This man doesn't actually have any particular plan in mind once he's subdued her resistance.

Normally, once you've tied someone up and taken away their freedom, the next step would be to violate the body.

That's the common-sense progression.

However, this man is not normal.

Because he's not normal, he's satisfied just by tying her up.

(Even I have to admit, he's a strange one.)

Because he is not ordinary, the ropes this man ties possess a power that brings out a peculiar favor.

It retains body heat.

It holds his aura.

It holds a mysterious color, sheen, and scent that only those who understand can perceive.

Men who, after tying her up, spread her legs, insert foreign objects, or do things akin to rape, or men who want to do such things, are, in short, ordinary.

(To put it bluntly, without fear of misunderstanding, they are simply vulgar.)

No matter how much a "normal" man puts on a facade of being anything but "normal" while tying a woman up with rope, the rope will function only as "normal" rope inherently does.

He's good for nothing more than tying up a square cardboard box. The more ordinary a man is, the more he wants to show off that he's not ordinary.

The rope tied by such a man could never touch the soul of someone who isn't ordinary, that is, a true rope enthusiast.

(If anyone thinks they can, what a fool they must be.)

Well, that doesn't really matter.

Anyway, the point is that there isn't a single scene in this Hiromi Saotome photo book where she exposes her lower body.

That's precisely why it's so difficult to decide what to do with the final page, the last scene, which could be called the climax.

Actually, no, it's not tricky at all.

If photographer Yamanouchi can perfectly capture Hiromi Saotome's expression and posture the moment she breaks free from the persona she's played for so long and reveal her true self, it's bound to be an absolutely stunning final shot.

Addendum

Akiyoshi Ran: Phantoms of a Land of Pleasure

The Unknown World of Akiyoshi Ran



Akiyoshi Ran (1922-1981), a solitary master of fantastic art. The Abnormal Museum houses a vast collection of nearly 500 original artworks donated by the Akiyoshi family. To coincide with the release of “Akiyoshi Ran and Aya Shijo: A Utopia of Eros and Fantasy Abnormal Museum’s Secret Collection Vol. 1” (published by Atelier Third), we are pleased to present an in-house exhibition featuring original artworks by Akiyoshi Ran that have never before been shown to the public.

The works created for various subculture magazines including vintage Showa-era SM publications such as

Uramado and Suspense Magazine serve to express the very indulgence in unearthly beauty and the absurd impulses stirring deep within Akiyoshi Ran himself. Even today, they beckon us toward a mysterious state of ecstasy. A utopia of chaotic fantasies, delusions, and visions lurking within an “abnormal” world. In this exhibition, the first in approximately three years to be open to the general public, the gallery will be filled with a collection of works designed to stimulate the deepest recess of the viewer’s sensibility and ignite a vivid imagination.

Akiyoshi Ran was a painter whom Tatsuhiko Shibusawa described as an artist “who could unashamedly drown himself in his own dreams,” yet he passed away in near-obscure. A posthumous exhibition of his work was held at the Aoki Gallery the year following his passing (1982), and the resplendent world of imagery he created, steeped in eroticism and fantasy, sent shockwaves through many who beheld it.



However Akiyoshi Ran possessed another facet to his artistic identity. From around 1950 and spanning many years thereafter, he continued to create cover art and illustrations for subculture

magazines. Although these magazines were mass-produced and consumed by the general public, the artwork continued within them was by no means mere side work to be dismissed lightly. Rather, it embodied a profound worldview on par with his fine art painting, lending a distinct sense of dignity to the publications in which it appeared.

Tatsuhiko Shibusawa once described Akiyoshi's work, with a note of envy, as popular surrealism. It could be argued that the very stage upon which this popular sensibility and his surrealist fantasies truly intertwined was found within the pages of those very subculture magazines. However, precisely because they were published in periodicals of an erotic nature, magazines often read and then discarded them, the work produced for such publications was long overlooked. Now, coinciding with the release of an art book dedicated to works featured in these very magazines, we were holding a simultaneous exhibition at two venues in Tokyo to shed light on a lesser-known facet of the artist Akiyoshi Ran.



At the Aoki Gallery in Ginza, a hallowed ground for fantastic art, we will display approximately 20 previously unpublished works (comprising of oil paintings, gouaches, and pencil drawings) held in the private collection of the Akiyoshi family. Meanwhile, at the Abnormal Museum, Japan's only library dedicated exclusively to SM and fetishism, we will exhibit around 70 works, focusing primarily on magazine illustrations and include pieces not featured in the new art book.

Every piece in this exhibition is being shown to the public for the very first time, making this a truly rare and invaluable opportunity. The profound depth of Akiyoshi's world remains undimmed even today. This exhibition is sure to captivate not only his longtime admirers but also a new generation of art enthusiasts. We sincerely hope you will take this opportunity to visit both the Aoki Gallery and the Abnormal Museum to fully immerse yourselves in the boundless allure of Akiyoshi Ran.

At the Abnormal Museum, in addition to the original artworks, we will also display a variety of related archival materials from our collection. Our exhibition will feature cover art, both original illustration and clippings, by Akiyoshi Ran. This includes his work for such well-known titles as SM King, SM Kitan, and SM Club (please note, however, that since the sheer volume of issues for which Akiyoshi designed covers across these various magazines is immense, our display will consist of a curated selection covering specific time periods). We will also showcase covers from the cult-favorite Mysterious Magazine, as well as from Decameron, a kasutori magazine for which few people today are even aware Akiyoshi provided cover art. A selection of these items

will be available for you to handle and examine up close. We invite you to take your time and enjoy browsing the display.

Isis's Backyard

Available starting November 11, 2010

Daydreaming Girls Club

"Issue 1, Isis's Backyard"

Kayako Saeki: Editor, Daydreaming Girls Club: Production

Abnormal Museum: Publisher

"Isis's Backyard," a fetish literary magazine by women, for women, has been launched. This beautiful fanzine is packed with 12 exquisite works, including novels, poetry, manga, senryu, and translated fiction, that express the authors' sexuality through a variety of artistic forms.

We highly recommend this not only to women who love novels, but also to men who feel something is lacking in the utilitarian works that flood today's media.

Additionally, the Daydreaming Girls Club is always accepting submissions from women who love to express themselves. If you've been hesitant to publish because you couldn't find a suitable outlet, or if you'd rather have your cherished work savored slowly with the tactile feel of paper rather than skimmed online, and you've enjoyed "Isis's Backyard," please feel free to contact us.

(Please check here for details on submitting your work)

A5 size, black and white, 96 pages total.

Non-members are also welcome to purchase this book. Please feel free to visit us.