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The Testimony of the Woodcutter Questioned by the Police Chief.

Yes, sir. I was the one who found the body. This morning as usual, I went to cut down the cedar trees on the side of the mountain. Whereupon I found the body laying in a grove shaded by the mountain. That spot, sir? It's about four or five blocks from the mountain road in a bamboo grove, past the thin cedar trees. It's not a popular spot, sir. The body was facing up, wearing a light indigo suikan and city style eboshi. As you saw, the body looked to have been pierced in the chest by a single sword stroke. The fallen bamboo leaves around the body were soaked with sappanwood. No, the blood had already stopped flowing. The wound itself also seemed to have dried. On top of that, there was a clinging botfly there that didn't seem like it could even hear my footsteps. Did I not see a sword or something there? No, I saw nothing, sir. Only a singular fallen rope at the root of a cedar tree nearby. Oh right, besides the rope, there was also a comb. Those two were the only things I found near the body. Still, the grass and fallen bamboo were completely trampled. He must've put up a serious fight before he died. What? Was there a horse? I can't imagine how a horse could get into that place.

The Testimony of the Traveling Buddhist Priest Questioned by the Police Chief

I definitely encountered the man yesterday. Yesterday... around noon, sir. He was walking alongside a woman riding a horse, heading towards Sekiyama from Yamashima. The woman was wearing a hat that veiled her face, so I couldn't see it. All I could see was the color of her clothes. If I remember correctly, the horse was a Palomino with a short-trimmed mane. The woman's height? It was 4 sun? As you can see, I'm a wandering monk, so I don't know that area well. The man was carrying a sword as well as a bow and arrows. I especially noticed the quiver was coated black with as many as twenty arrows in it. Even now, I still remember it clearly. I never would've imagined that he would end up like that. Human life is truly no different than a flash of lightning. I just don't have the words to express my sympathies for the man.

The Testimony of the Police Officer Questioned by the Police Chief.

The man I caught, chief? His name is Tajoumaru, he's a renowned thief. When I caught him, he had fallen from his horse, left groaning on top of a bridge in Awadaguchi. The time? It was in the evening, around the time of the first watch for the night. When I had failed to catch him the other day, he was wearing a deep blue suikan and an embossed sword. As you can see, he's also got a hold of a bow and arrows since then. You say It's like the one that dead body had... so surely Tajoumaru must've been the one to have killed him. The bow wound in leather, the black coated quiver, the seventeen arrows fletched with hawk feathers. It's certainly all there. The horse too, as you say, is a Palomino with a short mane. They were grazing a little ahead of the bridge, still dragging their harness. That bastard falling from his horse must've been fate. Last year, a woman presumed to have been coming to visit the Pindora of Toribe Temple was killed along with a girl. They say it was that guy's work. If he murdered that man, then there is no telling what he has done with that woman who was riding the horse. If I may be so bold, please look into this matter as well.

The Testimony of the Elderly Woman Questioned by the Police Chief.

Yes, the dead man is the one my daughter was married off to. He isn't from Miyako (Kyoto). He's a samurai from the town of Kokufu. His name was Kanazawa Takehiro. He was twenty-six years old. He had a gentle nature, so nobody should've held a grudge against him. My daughter? Her name is Masago, nineteen years old. She is a spirited girl, but I don't think she's ever been close to another man. She has a small oval-ish face with a dark complexion and a mole under her left eye. Takehiro had departed yesterday with my daughter for Wakasa, but for things to turn out like this such bad luck. Still, what has happened to my daughter. I've already given up on her husband, but I'm still concerned about my daughter. Please find my daughter no matter what. I hate that bastard called Tajoumaru or whatever. Not only her husband, but my daughter too... (The rest of her words were delivered through sobs)

Tajoumaru's Confession

I was the one who killed him, but not the girl. Then where did she go? Your guess is as good as mine. Just wait a second. No matter how much you torture me, I can't tell you what I don't know. Since things have come to this, I don't intend to keep secrets. A little past noon, I happened upon the married couple by chance. At that time, a gust of wind blew the veil of the woman's hat upwards, so I got a glimpse of her face, but it was fleeting. To me, the woman's face was like that of the Bodhisattva. At that moment, I decided to steal that woman away, even if I had to kill the man to do it. Killing a man isn't a big deal. If you're going to steal a woman, you naturally have to kill the man to do it. When I kill a man, I use the sword at my hip, but you people use your influence, money and sometimes do it under the pretense you're doing something good. Sure, they do not bleed and still yet live, but nevertheless you've still killed. Whether the depths of my crimes or yours are worse, I do not know. (sneering smile).

Still, I figured if I could take the woman without killing the man, I'd try. No, at that time I resolved myself to take her away without killing him. But, I definitely couldn't accomplish that on Yamashina road. So, I devised to lure them towards the mountains. I accompanied them and told them that there was an ancient mound in the mountains and that it was there that I had discovered many mirrors and swords. So that nobody else would know, I buried them in a grove behind the mountain and hoped to sell them at a low price to anyone who'd take them. The man was beginning to be moved by my story. Greed is a scary thing is it not? Before long they were guiding their horse towards the mountain with me in tow.

At the grove's entrance I told them the treasure was buried within and they should come and take a look. The man was blinded by greed, so he held no objections. The woman however said she would stay behind with the horse. Seeing how overgrown the grove was, it wasn't an unreasonable thing to say. To tell you the truth, It turned out exactly as I wished, so I left her as is and entered the grove alongside the man.

The grove is only bamboo for a short while. After about half a block, there was a clearing of cedars. For my purposes, there was not a better place to accomplish my work. While pushing through the grove, I told him a fairly plausible lie, that the treasure was hidden under the cedar trees. When I said this, he was already pushing towards the slender cedars. Before long the cedars thinned and started appearing in rows. As soon as we got here, I quickly pinned him down. He was armed with a sword and had the strength to use it, but I had caught him unaware, making it moot. I quickly tied him up to the root of a cedar tree. The rope? A rope is a thief's blessing. You never know when you'll need to scale a wall, so I diligently had one tied around my waist. Of course, so that he couldn't speak, I also stuffed his mouth full of bamboo leaves. Besides that, there was no problem at all.

Once I dealt with him, I returned once more to the woman. I told her that he had been afflicted with a sudden illness and that she should come see him. This too, went as I expected. She had her hat off and I led her deep into the grove by the hand. The moment she noticed her husband tied to the cedar root, with a flash of light, she withdrew a small knife from her breast pocket. I'd never seen such a woman with a violent temper before now. If I had been careless at that time, I would've had that knife thrust into my side. I dodged, but she kept relentlessly slashing at me. She could've injured me. But, I am Tajoumaru, so I somehow was able to strike the knife from her hand without drawing my own sword. No matter how much willpower she possessed, she had no chance without a weapon. Like I wanted, I managed to avoid taking the husband's life and obtain the woman.

Right... without taking his life. I didn't intend to kill him. Leaving the woman to weep, I was about to flee the grove, but she suddenly clung to my arm like a madwoman. She disjointedly asked that either I or her husband die for her. For two men to see her shame was more painful than death. She gasped out that she wanted to be married to whoever survived. It was then that a fierce wish to kill her husband came over me. (sullen excitement)

Telling you something like this, you probably see me as a crueler human than you, right? However, that's only because you didn't see her face. Because you didn't see the fire that burned in her eyes at that moment. When my eyes met hers, I knew I wanted to make her my wife even if I were to be struck by lightning for it. I wanted to make her my wife. That was the only thought that filled my mind. You're probably thinking this was driven solely by lust. If I was only driven by lust at that time, I would've gotten along just fine kicking her down and making a run for it. Wouldn't have had to stain my swords with the man's blood either. But, as I saw her standing motionlessly in that dark grove, I decided I wouldn't leave without killing him.

Still, I didn't want to kill him by cowardly means, so I undid the rope and told him to cross swords with me (What was found at the cedar's root was the rope that was dropped) With an enraged expression, he withdrew his thick sword and wordlessly sprang towards me. I don't need to tell you how our battle turned out. Twenty-three strikes, it took twenty-three strikes to pierce his chest. Twenty-three strikes... Please don't forget this. Until now, nobody has ever clashed swords with me even twenty times, except for him (cheerful smile).

When he collapsed, I lowered my blood stained sword as I turned towards her only to see that she was nowhere to be found. Where had she run off to? I looked for her between the cedar trees and fallen bamboo leaves, but she left no trace of herself. I also listened, but only got to hear the man's dying breaths.

Perhaps she ran off to call for someone's help when our swords first clashed. Thinking that, I realized my life was on the line, so I took his sword plus his bow and arrow before promptly heading back towards the mountain road. It was there that I saw her horse calmly grazing. To tell you what happened after that would be a waste of words. I'll only say that I had already passed off the sword before I entered town. That's my confession. I already know I'll hang for this, so give me the maximum penalty please (proud look).

The Confession Of The Woman Who Has Come To Kiyomizu-Dera

After that man wearing a deep blue suikan had his way with me, he mockingly laughed at my bound husband. How that must've chagrined my husband. But, no matter how much he struggled, the effort only served to tighten the rope and cause it to bite into him further. I instinctively stumbled to his side. No, that's what I intended to do, but at that time the man kicked me to the side. Just as he had done that, I saw a light in my husband's eye that I can't describe. Even now, when I recall those eyes I can't help but shudder. Even if my husband couldn't utter a single word, that light in his eyes told me everything his heart wanted to say. It was neither anger or sadness in the light of those eyes, just disdain. Just the cold light of disdain directed at me. Struck more by his look than by the man's kick, I reflexively called out to him before finally falling unconscious.

When I finally came to, the man wearing the suikan had already gone off somewhere. Only my husband, who was still bound to the tree's root, remained. I raised myself from the fallen bamboo leaves and looked upon his face. His eyes hadn't changed at all from before. Beneath

the cold contempt in his eyes, there was hatred. Embarrassment, grief, frustration, I don't know how to describe what I felt in my heart at that time. Struggling to my feet, I approached his side. "Since things have turned out like this, we can no longer live together. I am prepared to die, but you too must die. You saw my disgrace and so you cannot be left alive."

That was the only thing I managed to say. Even after that, his gaze only held disgust for me. While it felt like my heart would be torn apart, I searched for his sword. Unfortunately, that thief had already snatched it away and of course the bow and arrow as well was nowhere to be found. Thankfully, there was a small knife lying at my feet. I raised it overhead and once more spoke to my husband, "Now then, give me your life, I will accompany you soon."

When he heard those words, his lips finally moved. Naturally, I couldn't hear his words since his mouth was packed with leaves, but I understood what he meant to say just by looking. "Kill me", he said, still despising me. In a trance, I thrust the small knife through his light indigo suikan and into his chest.

Once again, I must've lost consciousness at this point. When I finally looked around, he was still bound, but had long ceased breathing. His pale face was illuminated by a streak of sunlight from the setting sun streaming through a gap in the cedars and bamboo. While swallowing my cries, I undid his ropes. What... what I have turned into, I no longer have the strength to tell you. Anyhow, I didn't find the strength to die. I stabbed myself in the throat, threw myself into a pond at the mountain's base, and tried various other things, but still couldn't accomplish it. This isn't something to be proud of either (lonely smile). Even someone as pitiful as me might've been abandoned by the compassionate Avalokiteshvara. Even though I killed my husband. Even though I was violated by that thief. What should I do? I... I... (sudden relentless sobbing).

The Testimony of the Murdered Man, As Told Through A Shrine Maiden

After violating my wife, the thief sat down and comforted her. Naturally, I couldn't speak up. My body was tied to the tree after all. But, I winked at her multiple times. I wanted to convey to her not to believe the thief's words. Something of that kind of meaning at least. Unfortunately, my wife sat dejectedly among the grass and leaves, staring down at her knees. It seemed like she was listening attentively to the thief's words. I writhed with jealousy. He went on with his clever story saying that since her body was tainted, our relationship would be ruined and that she should be his wife instead. The thief had the audacity to ask such an outrageous thing. Like in a trance, my wife raised her head to his words. I had never seen her looking so beautiful before that moment. What was her reply to that thief while I sat there bound to the tree? My thoughts are muddled, but I burn with anger when I think of her reply. She said, "Please take me with you wherever you go (long silence).

This isn't her only sin. If that were the case, I would not be so tormented in this darkness. While the thief led her by the hand out of the grove, her complexion paled and pointed towards the cedar tree. "Kill him please! We cannot be together for as long as he still lives!" she cried, like she had lost her mind, she cried, "Kill him please!". Even now, those words feel like a tempest

that would blow me headfirst into the bottom of the darkness. Has such hateful words come out of a human's mouth before? Has such hateful words touched a human's ear before? Even once something like that (sudden outburst of scorn-filled laughter)? Upon hearing those words, even the thief's face turned pale. "Kill him please!" she cried as she clung to his arm. Starting at her, he didn't reply on whether or not he would kill me. I didn't get to think about it as he then kicked her to the ground (another outburst). He calmly folded his arms and looked at me, "What do you intend to do with the woman? Kill her? Or perhaps save her? Just nodding is fine. Kill her?" Just for those words alone I want you to pardon the thief of his crimes (once more, a long silence).

While I hesitated, she cried out and ran into the grove's depths. The thief sprung after her, but failed to even grasp her sleeve. I just watched the scene like a ghost. After she disappeared, the thief picked up my sword and bow and arrow. He cut one of the ropes and I remember him muttering "Next time, it'll be my life". as he disappeared from the grove. Then it was all quiet. No, someone was crying still. As I undid the rope, I listened and looked before realizing the crying was in fact my own (third time, a long silence).

I finally raised my exhausted body from the cedar tree's root. Before me, my wife's knife shined. I took up the sword and stabbed it into my chest. A bloody taste arose in my mouth, but it wasn't painful. When my chest grew cold, it was as silent as the grave. Ah, what a silence it was. Not even a single bird's chirp could be heard in the sky of this mountain's shade. Only a lonely light drifted in from the shade of the cedars and bamboo. That light gradually faded till I could see the trees and bamboo no longer. As I layed there, a deep silence enveloped me.

Then, someone with quiet steps approached me. Something had come to my side. I tried to look, but the light had already dimmed around me. Someone... that someone whose hand I couldn't see, gently withdrew the knife from my chest. At the same time, blood once more flowed into my mouth. And with that, once and for all I sank into the dark.