

THE GREEN PARK: A NOH PLAY

Waki: A Clergyman
Shite: 1. An Old Woman
2. Lucrezia Warren Smith
Scene: London

(A stylised tree stands center-stage and musicians are seated on folding stools at the right. The Waki enters, wearing a black cassock.)

Waki. It is late, *(Shidai)*
I must hurry.
They will be waiting
and are in such need of help.

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and are in such need of help.

I am a clergyman, a parish priest, *(Nanori)*
returning through St. James's Park to my cure of souls.

How beautiful *(Michi-yuki)*
it always is after
Evensong.
The Abbey, uplifting;
outside, the stillness
of a clear summer night; a
pale, gold light
softens the sweet air.

(He circles the stage.)

Shadows lengthen across
the grass among the trees;
Waterbirds nest
beside the silver lake; a
path of flowers
through a forest glade; a
green thought
in a green shade

A green thought
in a green shade.

(Waki advances downstage.)

Oh! In my reverie I've crossed the Mall
and entered The Green Park quite unaware.

(Tsuki-zerifu)

(The Shite enters. wearing a mask. chignon. and a full-cut gown of reddish-purple silk with bell sleeves. She carries a broken tree branch with a few elm leaves on it.)

Shite.

I live nearby
but when the evening
is spread out against the sky,
I am more at home
among these trees.

(Issei)

I look for peace
in this deserted place:
the haunt of lovers,
refuge from corrupting care.

Fear no more
the furious winter's rages,
for the human voice
can quicken trees to life and the
excitement of the elms, rising and
falling -
their leaves alight;
colours thinning and thickening,
from blue to the green
of a hollow wave,
like plumes on horses' heads -
brings on an ecstasy.

(Sashi)

All my life
I have made my way
to this solitary spot.
The world has raised its whip!
Where will it descend?

(Uta)

I can stand it no longer.
I cannot sit beside him
when he stares so
and does not see me
and makes everything terrible:
sky and tree,
children playing -
dragging carts,

blowing whistles,
falling down -
all are terrible.
He is selfish and I
am not happy without him.
He makes one so solitary;
there is no one I can tell.
My wedding ring is loose,
the fingers have grown so thin.

Waki. What a sad sight, *(Mondo)*
that woman, angular and old,
Who talks to the trees
in the gathering twilight.

Shite. Why should I suffer,
I have done no wrong.
He isn't himself;
he says cruel, wicked things,
talking to himself,
talking to a dead man

But who is it
that acts this way?
She must be deeply troubled
and in need of help.

Shite. Septimus Warren Smith
pointed in agony, in relief;
my wedding band was gone.
The bond was cut.

Waki. But what are you saying;
What exactly happened?
How has all this
come about?

(A chorus of six or eight men in cassocks and surplices has already entered and knelt on red-velvet hassocks which they carry.)

Shite. Experience changed the innocent oval
to a face, lean, contracted, and hostile.
The European War had tutored him:
,There are no lasting emotions.'

violently, from the open
window
 onto the area railings.

Once you falter
 men pursue you (Kuri)

Chorus. They hunt in packs, scouring
 the desert.
They desert the fallen
 and vanish into the wilderness.

Shite. Human nature is remorseless;
 the soul knows no defence.

Chorus. The rack and the thumbscrew are
 applied without pity.
Limbs are exposed,
 wounds laid bare.

Shite. The unfeeling worship conformity and (Sashi)
 penalize despair.
They love to impress, to impose,
 their own features
on the face of the populace;
 to feast on the wills of the weak.

Chorus. His was not (Kuse)
 the slow sinking
of a waterlogged will.

(She dances.)

His body was macerated,
 nerve fibres alone were left,
spread like a veil
 upon a rock.
The elms beckoned,
 the leaves were alive
and connected by millions of fibres
 with his own body.
They fanned it
 up and down.
When the branches stretched,
 he too made that statement.
The sparrows fluttered,
 rising and falling;

In this deepening light
 she seems
to grow younger,
 to move
as though her body
 relived the experience.

Skite.

O God
 release my soul
 from its dream.
Mankind
 can do no more.

(Issei)

Appease
 the misery of the living
and the remorse
 of the dead.

My dress flames.
 My body burns.

(Waka)

(She dances.)

Chorus.

He had thrown himself
 from the window.
Up had flashed the
ground; Through
him,
 blundering, bruising,
went the rusty spikes.
There he lay with a thud,
thud, thud in his brain,
and then a suffocation
 of blackness.

Had he preserved
 the thing that mattered?
A thing
 wreathed about with chatter
defaced, obscured
 in all our lives,
a thing let drop every day
 in corruption, lies, chatter?
A thing let drop every day
 in corruption, lies, chatter?

(Kuri)