

BLOOD THEATER  
A SHORT

Written by

Dan Goudreau

Aug 2021

NOTE: All dialogue is in Japanese, translated here.

FADE IN:

EXT. A NAGASAKI PORT VILLAGE STREET - NIGHT

Teems of sweaty half-naked people pulse through the overcrowded unpaved streets, a lawless quickly-erected red light district on a moonlit summer night.

The bustling throng of partygoers are like a moving road. All manner of strata mingle and carouse, drunk, eager to ogle at fleshpots or debase a tarnished traveling theater.

SUPERIMPOSE: "NAGASAKI, 1877"

RYU (18) thin, almost feminine and GOU-KAI (19) portly, slightly drunk, sweep along with the moving mass. Their scrubbed faces and finer clothes make them a curiosity, amusing to a few passers-by who shake their heads.

Sake is being passed around freely. Gou-Kai is quick to accept and drink his share.

Ryu turns it down. Soberly, he scours ahead looking for something.

RYU

There. Kabuki. They will need artisans.

GOU-KAI

I am ashamed we were robbed. We don't even have coin for food.

He is distracted. A scantily clad female with wild long hair hustles bare foot down the street. Revelers, male and female howl at her.

Someone passing by hands Gou-Kai more sake. He downs it eagerly.

Ryu grabs his arm.

RYU

Kabuki is ahead. Come. I will find work. Then we can eat.

GOU-KAI

But you make 'Noh' robes. I do not believe we will find noblemen here.

They pass a man in older samurai clothing. A LEWD MERCHANT.  
He hovers before a tent that has no windows.

LEWD MERCHANT

Boys? Boys?

Ryu and Gou-Kai look at each other, quizzical.

The Lewd Merchant opens the tent. They peer inside. They can only see legs moving within a smoky haze.

They shake their heads, moving on. Ryu pulls Gou-Kai to insure their getaway.

Just ahead; shouting. A fight of some kind. Three men and two women, dressed for a night of fun are upset with an OLD MAN. One of the men threatens the old man with a torch, held like a club.

OLD MAN

Curses on you. On all of you.

The old man is being shooed away into the crowd but as he curses, only Ryu can see his appearance is altered.

RYU'S POV - OLD MAN

A taller, more muscular demonic creature, angry with furrowed brow and small horns is transposed occupying the same spot as the old man. Ryu sees both personas at the same time.

As the old man hurls one last curse before disappearing into the crowd, Ryu can hear the demon's guttural growl behind the old man's voice.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)

A night of blood for you. Blood and pain. And crushing of bone.

The demon's gaze meets Ryu's for one chilling moment.

Ryu darts away, back into the

MOVING CROWD

Gou-Kai can barely keep up.

GOU-KAI

Stupid old man.

Ryu, shaken, peers wide-eyed at Gou-Kai.

RYU

Did you see? Devils.

Gou-Kai shrugs, amused. Sips more sake.

GOU-KAI  
Sake devils.

RYU  
No.

Gou-Kai lays his hand on Ryu's arm. Leans in.

GOU-KAI  
Not your 'second sight' again?

Gou-Kai laughs heartily at Ryu. Stops.

GOU-KAI (CONT'D)  
Wait! Maybe we make money off  
'second sight.' Eh?

Ryu ignores this. He spots a field version of Kabuki theater just ahead. A Kabuki performance is already underway.

Ryu pushes his way past adults of all strata to force his way into a spot to get a better view.

A KABUKI MERCHANT appears, hovers right behind Ryu as Gou-Kai catches up.

Gou-Kai taps Ryu on the back.

GOU-KAI (CONT'D)  
He wants payment.

Ryu shows the Kabuki merchant the fine robe he is wearing. Hand-crafted delicate finery.

RYU  
You see?

Ryu runs his hands across the finer points of artistry.

The merchant inspects it closely.

KABUKI MERCHANT  
This is 'Noh'.

Ryu beams.

You won't find 'Noh' here, my handsome young friend.

RYU  
I can make any robe. Kabuki...  
Ningyō jōruri...

The merchant laughs. Points to an alley behind the Kabuki stage. It is filled with young men and women, some sewing, some drinking, and some making love.

KABUKI MERCHANT  
Robes, I don't need. Boys,  
however...

His face becomes lascivious.

Gou-Kai pulls Ryu away.

KABUKI MERCHANT (CONT'D)  
Hey. Sweet boy. Be careful not to  
get blood and urine on your  
nightdress.

The Kabuki merchant makes a mocking kissing sound.

As the boys hustle off, they almost walk right into a western holy man in a dark robe, watching the Kabuki. Dangling from his robe, beads, chain, gold. A Crucifix hangs at his waist.

Ryu bows.

RYU  
Pardons, Good Sir.

The WESTERN HOLY MAN only glances at them before returning his steely gaze to the Kabuki performance.

WESTERN HOLY MAN POV - KABUKI PERFORMANCE

This red light district field Kabuki has a profane air to it. This is not formal Kabuki. It is almost a parody. On the stage, a demon character is surrounded by monks, chanting.

As the stage demon is entirely encircled, he laughs fiendishly, blasting his evil gaze on each monk.

BACK TO RYU AND GOU-KAI

Once again they move along in the human stream, heading toward a huge tent with a sign that reads:

INSERT - Ningyō jōruri

Ryu and Gou-Kai pay the NINGYŌ JŌRURI MERCHANT and are allowed inside the tent.

## INT. NINGYŌ JŌRURI TENT

It is standing room only and Ryu and Gou-Kai must push their way to be able to see the performance. The onlookers are drinking and laughing. The irreverent nature of the crowd confuses Ryu. He can see the performance.

It is Ningyō jōruri and the puppets sport exciting colorful expressive robes but the story being performed is lewd and beneath the dignity of Ningyō jōruri.

Puppet characters are disrobing and have expressive body parts. The crowd is cheering in delight.

Ryu's face is one of shock, like being in a sin-stained temple.

Just as Gou-Kai is about to see the performance Ryu pulls him along to exit.

GOU-KAI

Where? Why aren't we...

## EXT. - NAGASAKI PORT VILLAGE STREET

Ryu finds the Ningyō jōruri Merchant. Shows the man his fine 'Noh' sleeve. Ryu is desperate.

RYU

I came here to make fine robes. I trained under my father's father to make the finest 'Noh' costumes in all of Japan. I do not understand this... street theater.

NINGYŌ JŌRURI MERCHANT

This is fine delicate work. I recognize the 'Noh' artistry. What province are you from, lad?

Ryu's demeanor alters. He feels respected. The man recognizes his family's work.

RYU

My family is from Osaka. We have crafted robes for centuries for Daimyos and exclusively for Kyoto's 'Noh' Theaters. My father's father was tailor to the Shogun himself.

The merchant feigns awe, sensing the boy's proud and sensitive spirit.

NINGYŌ JŌRURI MERCHANT

If you can fashion for us a series  
of Ningyō jōruri costumes tomorrow,  
I can put you up for the night in  
the empty stables and your meals  
and sake will be free of charge.

GOU-KAI

Meals? Sake? Done.

Ryu peers at Gou-Kai for speaking out of turn.

RYU

Agreed.

The merchant points down the busy lane to a huge structure  
made from bamboo and tall grasses. A temporary stables but  
devoid of animals. Many people are housed within it and  
bustle inside and out of its doorways.

NINGYŌ JŌRURI MERCHANT

There. Find a spot inside later  
when you can no longer stand. You  
can breakfast here behind the  
Ningyō jōruri tent with the  
artists.

Ryu bows, grateful. It is odd to find respect here in the  
mouth of hell.

Gou-Kai staggers a bit as they head toward the stables. He  
does not appear well.

RYU

Are you okay? Gou-Kai?

Gou-Kai is annoyed or is pretending to be annoyed.

GOU-KAI

Mother Hen.

They make their way through the swarm of revelers and arrive  
at the stables. They go inside. People are everywhere, coming  
and going.

INT. TEMPORARY STABLES

People are strewn about, sleeping, carousing and moving  
along. Only one or two goats are present. It is as if all the  
animals were sold at auction.

Ryu and Gou-Kai try to find an area within where they can lay down but it is difficult with so many people. Ryu locates a spot to bed and turns to show Gou-Kai.

RYU

Here.

Gou-Kai is reeling. Losing the ability to stand, he falls into the spot Ryu had chosen. His body begins convulsing. His head shaking. His eyes move up into his head leaving white orbs. He cries out as he shakes violently on the straw.

RYU (CONT'D)

Gou-Kai!

To crowd

He has seizures. Since he was a boy. Help me to hold him.

No one helps. A few people laugh.

Ryu tries to help Gou-Kai. Tries to put a piece of leather in his mouth. Gou-Kai smashes his head on a piece of metal farm equipment and his ear is torn and blood pours out.

RYU (CONT'D)

Help me. Help me!

A MAN bends down to hold Gou-Kai's legs.

MAN

The men of medicine are one street down. You will find them by the lantern sellers. Go. Bring them here.

Two other men bend down to help. Grateful, nervous and sweating Ryu rises to go find help.

EXT. - NAGASAKI PORT VILLAGE STREET

Ryu races down a lane busy with revelers. The lane has many lit lanterns, all for sale.

Lantern Merchants try to hustle Ryu to buy their wares.

He ignores them moving on until he reaches the medical hut. Doctors of medicine are inside the open doorway, laughing and making merry.

Ryu is before them, at the foot of the stairs. They stand atop the stairs in the doorway. Ryu bows to them.



RYU

Please, honorable sirs. My friend is having seizures in the stables. You must come. He Hit his head and is losing blood.

They stop laughing with each other to inspect Ryu. Looking down at him, their joking continues but now Ryu is the object of their derision.

MASTER DOCTOR

Who are you boy? Who is your friend?

RYU

I am Kaizi Ryu of Osaka. My friend is...

They lean, waiting. Ryu's hesitancy interests them.

MASTER DOCTOR

Go on. Who is your friend?

Ryu, protective of Gou-Kai's identity, must trust them.

RYU

Please, good Master. You must help. My friend is Edo Gou-Kai of Kyoto. He is from a prominent military family. His fathers served the Shogunate for a century. He is almost a prince.

The Master Doctor and his bumbling near-blind pupil with round glasses, look at each other. The Master Doctor laughs heartily, almost angrily with glee.

MASTER DOCTOR

Shogun no more, eh? You would do well to keep your mouth shut, Boy. There are many men here who would kill servants of the dead Shogun.

The Master Doctor tosses Ryu an apple. Ryu catches it.

The Master Doctor motions for his pupil to follow him back inside.

MASTER DOCTOR (CONT'D)

Maybe, this fruit will heal your friend, eh? Haha Hahahaha.

He disappears into his hut. His Pupil lingers looking apologetic at Ryu. He shrugs his shoulders. Ryu senses he wishes he could assist.

MASTER DOCTOR (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
GET IN!

The Pupil shakily disappears into the Medical Hut and the door is closed.

Ryu is downcast, frightened. He looks all around, in supplication at people staring at him.

THE WESTERN HOLY MAN (O.S.)  
Take me to your friend.

Ryu spins toward the voice. The Western Holy Man in black robes he had stumbled into earlier is ten feet away, in the street, surrounded by seven disciples.

THE WESTERN HOLY MAN (CONT'D)  
Your friend. Take me to him.

Ryu bows.

RYU  
Master.

The Western Holy Man points and Ryu is quick to race back to the stables with The Western Holy Man and his disciples in pursuit.

When they reach the stables, a large host of people have encircled the grass and bamboo structure and are standing several feet away from it. A few are at its doors, peering in through cut out windows.

Ryu approaches slowly, bewildered by the crowd and what must be happening inside.

He looks in and sees a girl inside. The barefoot girl he had seen earlier tonight. He looks around at the people whose faces reveal terror.

He opens the door to go inside.

INT. TEMPORARY STABLES

Ryu looks around for Gou-Kai. He is not within sight. Ryu looks to the girl. She squats, moving back and forth. Back and forth. Leering at Ryu. Foaming at the mouth.

A glint of evil in her eyes. She glares at Ryu. Coiling.



GIRL/DEMON

Master?

She collapses, unconscious. The demon disappears.

All of the disciples and others inside, fall on their faces around The Western Holy Man.

Ryu can see Gou-Kai lying in a corner. Dead.

Horrified, he looks to The Western Holy Man

THE WESTERN HOLY MAN

Is that your friend, Boy? How is  
he?

Ryu can't speak.

RYU'S POV - THE WESTERN HOLY MAN

Ryu sees within the Western Holy Man, the largest most diabolical devil he has ever seen with his 'second sight.' Pure dripping evil. The Devil is in disguise.

Ryu can't speak or move.

The Western Holy Man/Devil raises his giant hoof to crush Ryu's skull.

The end.