

Visiting Hanago
(Hanago)

Man
Taro Kaja
Wife

MAN I am a resident of the suburbs of the capital. One year ago, when I made a trip to the east, I stopped for the night at Nogami in the Land of Mino. I happened to hire a woman named Hanago to serve me wine. Due to the fragility of her woman's heart, she has come to the capital to visit me and has taken lodging in North Shirakawa. She frequently writes me letters, but since my jealous old witch of a wife has gotten wind of it, she follows me about so closely that it is quite impossible to answer her repeated messages, even to the extent that I have not been able to write her a single reply. And I just received another letter from Hanago saying that if I do not come visit her this very night, we will never see each other again, for she will throw herself into any ditch or river she finds and die. As there is no other way, I have decided to deceive the old witch and go visit Hanago. (Calling to his WIFE.) I say, I say, dear Wife. Are you there, are you there?

WIFE What a bother, what a bother you are! What is it you have called

me here about?

MAN I have a small matter to discuss with you. First come all the way in here.

WIFE With all my heart. You've got me worried. What is the matter?

MAN It's of no great import, but these days, I have been having a series of bad dreams. Concerning which, I am convinced that there is nothing more important than the afterlife.

WIFE Well, I must say, what foolish words you utter. As those one meets are dreams, those one does not meet are dreams, and everything about this transient life is but a dream, you must not concern yourself in the least about such things.

MAN Indeed, dreams are but transient things, and the transience of human flesh is even compared with morning mist. And while we possess such easily-dissipated bodies, we are much too negligent. Thus I have decided to enter the path toward the afterlife beginning today.

WIFE That is all the same one way or the other.

MAN Oh, no. Praying for the afterlife is not such a simple matter.

WIFE What is so difficult about it?

MAN One must go on a pilgrimage.

WIFE What is this thing called a pilgrimage?

MAN Going on a pilgrimage means to leave one's home and go out to visit the temples in all the lands.

WIFE That must take a great lot of time.

MAN As it means ascetic training in each and every land, it will take something like twelve or thirteen years.

WIFE I say, I say. How rash you are, how very rash! How could I who cannot bear for you to be away for even a single day possible endure your being absent for twelve or thirteen years?

MAN Well, there is a way in which it can be accomplished in as little as three years.

WIFE Do not so much as consider even three years. I will not allow you to leave for even the briefest span of time. So do not waste your breath further.

MAN You do not understand, as they say that if one person achieves Buddhahood, all of his descendants, even to the seventh generation, automatically achieve it as well, so do you not see that it will benefit not only your yourself but our children as well.

WIFE If you are so determined, do your ascetic training right here in the house.

MAN What good would ascetic training here in the house do?

WIFE Well, you can just light incense on your arms or on your head.

MAN What a waste. What good would it do this mundane flesh to light

incense on arms or head?

WIFE Whatever you may say, I will not allow you to out of the house for even the briefest span of time. So do not waste your breath further.

MAN Well, I must say, what a pity. Though I have hit upon such a good plan, you refuse your permission. Oh, I just remembered something. If that is the case, give me leave for one day and one night.

WIFE After saying it would take a full twelve or thirteen years, what do you mean by one day and one night.

MAN It is due to your saying I should do my ascetic training right here in the house. It is because there is a way to achieve enlightenment through encloistering one's in one's own home chapel, covering oneself with a brocade veil, and sitting in Zen meditation that I asked that you give me leave for one day and one night.

WIFE It is not right for me to refuse you every request you make. If it is for one day and one night, you may do whatever you please.

MAN What's that? You say I may do whatever I please?

WIFE Most certainly

MAN While it is not exactly what I wanted, I am content that you consent. Now I bow to you in gratitude.

WIFE Here, here. How rash you are, how very rash! What do you mean joining your hands together in front of a woman? Just get to your feet, get to your feet. When the night deepens, I will warm some wine and come see how you are doing.

MAN Oh, no, no. During a Zen meditation session, even hearing the sound of a woman's voice will void all its ascetic effects. You must not under any circumstances come to see how I am doing.

WIFE You say I am not to come see how you are doing?

MAN It is quite unthinkable.

WIFE If that is the case, I will not come see how you are doing.

MAN We will meet again early tomorrow morning then.

WIFE Let us meet again early tomorrow morning.

BOTH Fare you well, fare you well.

(The WIFE starts off.)

MAN I say, I say.

WIFE What is it?

MAN Any sort of disturbance in a priest's environs is said to make Zen enlightenment most difficult, so you must not under any circumstances come to see how I am doing.

WIFE I will not come see how you are doing. You may put your heart to complete rest on that score.

MAN I am content.

BOTH Fare you well, fare you well.

(The WIFE exits.)

MAN Oh, how happy, how happy I am. I have completely deceived my witch of a wife. Shall I dash off immediately to Hanago's place? No, no. I have a capital plan. It is well known that women are far most astute at deception than their husbands. And besides, as that wife of mine is quick at catching on, if she should decide to take a peek, there must be somebody sitting Zen meditation here. Just what am I to do. Oh, I have an idea. Hey, hey! Taro Kaja.

TARO KAJA Here.

MAN Are you there?

TARO KAJA (Dropping to his knees and bowing.) At your service, Sir.

MAN Get right to your feet, get to your feet.

TARO KAJA What unusually good spirits you are in.

MAN And I have the best of reasons for being in good spirits. I have deceived my witch of a wife, and I am going to visit Hanago!

TARO KAJA What did you have to say to convince that raucous wife of yours?

MAN That is just what I called you here to tell you about. I told her that there is a way to achieve enlightenment through encloistering oneself in one's own home chapel, covering oneself with a brocade veil, and sitting in Zen meditation and got her to give me leave for

one day and one night to do so. Did I not do very well?

TARO KAJA You did very well indeed.

MAN Concerning which, I have a favor to request of you.

TARO KAJA What might it be?

MAN I forbade her to come see how I am doing, but as she is quick at catching on, if she should decide to take a peek, there must be somebody sitting Zen meditation here. While I realize what a great bother it is, please take my place and sit here all night tonight in Zen meditation.

TARO KAJA As you say, Sir, but if she should find out about this at a later date, I would not escape punishment from her. Please allow me not to do this.

MAN On that score you have no need for concern. She has promised not to come see how I am doing. It is for just in case she does. I humbly beg you to sit Zen meditation here for me.

TARO KAJA No matter what you say, I beg you to allow me not to do this.

MAN What's that? You say no matter what I say, you ask me to allow you not to do it?

TARO KAJA Most certainly.

MAN So is it that you are so afraid of what my wife will say that you will listen to her but you will not listen to me?

TARO KAJA No, that is not the case.

MAN What are you jabbering about? Was it not you who went to deliver my letter just the other day? There is an old saying about lowly servant that states that a lord must use his retainers with benevolence and a retainer must serve his lord without the least regret for his own life. A rascal like you deserves nothing better than being cut down and thrown out. (He puts his hand to his sword and strikes a threatening pose.)

TARO KAJA Please wait just a moment.

MAN Wait for what?

TARO KAJA I will do as you say, Sir.

MAN Well, I thought you said you would not.

TARO KAJA I will do as you say, Sir.

MAN You have agreed.

TARO KAJA Yes.

MAN (Laughing.) I was only joking, I was only joking.

TARO KAJA You say you were only joking?

MAN This is all due to my lack of anyone else to ask. While I realize it is a great imposition, please sit Zen meditation for me.

TARO KAJA I did refuse once, but the way things stand, I will do as you say, Sir.

MAN First come all the way in here.

TARO KAJA As you say, Sir.

(TARO KAJA crosses down stage left as the MAN brings a stool and a brocade meditation veil.)

MAN **(Placing the stool behind TARO KAJA.)** Now sit down on this.

TARO KAJA As you say, Sir.

MAN While I realize how uncomfortable it may be, please cover yourself with this brocade veil.

TARO KAJA With all my heart.

MAN Now, while it goes without say, make sure you do not take it off.

TARO KAJA I will indeed not take it off.

MAN I will see you when I come back tomorrow morning.

TARO KAJA I beg you to come back as early as you can tomorrow morning.

MAN I am depending on you, I am depending on you. Oh, how happy I am. I must hurry on my way to Hanago's place. **(He exits.)**

WIFE He said that I absolutely must not come see how he is doing, but

I feel so very concerned about him that I have decided to take a peek from the shadows. I say, I say. How uncomfortable he must be, how uncomfortable he must be! Seeing him in such a state, I cannot bear it a moment longer. (Approaching TARO KAJA.) I say, I say. It is me, your wife. Though you said that I absolutely must not come see how you are doing, I felt so very concerned about you that I decided to take a peek from the shadows and was shocked to see how uncomfortable you look. Just take off that brocade veil.

(TARO KAJA shakes the veil back and forth in a gesture of refusal.)

WIFE How can you refuse? Zen meditation is only effective if you survive with your life. In any case, take off that brocade veil.

(TARO KAJA shakes the veil in refusal once more.)

WIFE In that case, I will take it off for you. (She jerks the veil off of TARO KAJA.) Huh? Are you not Taro Kaja?

TARO KAJA Yes.

WIFE Oh, how angry, how angry I am. Where has my husband gone, where has he gone?

TARO KAJA I have no idea where he may have gone.

WIFE If you do not know, who does know? Get out of my sight, get out of my sight!

TARO KAJA Please wait just a moment, wait just a moment.

WIFE Wait for what?

TARO KAJA To Lady Hanago.

WIFE Lady Hanago? Oh, how angry, how angry I am. You take sides with him and call her Lady Hanago too? (Beating TARO KAJA.) Call her rascal, call her rascal!

TARO KAJA Ow, ouch! Ow, ouch! Please wait just a moment!

WIFE Wait for what?

TARO KAJA Expecting this sort of thing to happen, I refused using every excuse I could think of, but as he said if I did not sit Zen meditation for him, he would execute me on the spot, there was nothing left for me but to sit Zen meditation as he ordered.

WIFE What's this you say? You mean to tell me that though you refused, that useless husband threatened to cut you down if you did not sit Zen meditation for him, and out of fear of his threat you are here doing this?

TARO KAJA It is as you say indeed.

WIFE In that case, it is no fault of yours.

TARO KAJA It is indeed no fault of mine.

WIFE Hey! Listen to me. I am going to sit Zen meditation. When I think what a devious device he used to get away to visit Hanago, my body burns with rage and I am filled with anger!

TARO KAJA I am certain it is no wonder how you feel.

WIFE I have a favor to request of you. Will you do it for me?

TARO KAJA Just what might it be?

WIFE Fix me up to look like you did just now.

TARO KAJA As you say, Ma'am, but if he were to find out, he would not let me off easily. I humbly beg you to allow me not to do this.

WIFE On that score, I assure you, you have no need for concern. I will send you to my parents' village where that useless husband of mine will not be able to lay a single finger on you.

TARO KAJA If that is the case, I will do as you say. First come all the way over here. (He places the stool behind here.) Now sit down on this. (She sits on the stool.) While I realize how uncomfortable it may be, please cover yourself with this brocade veil. (During the ensuing dialogue, TARO KAJA puts the brocade veil over the WIFE and arranges it carefully to make her look just as he did.)

WIFE The more I think of how he deceived me and went off to visit that rascal Hanago, then more my body burns with rage and I am filled with anger!

TARO KAJA I am certain it is no wonder how you feel.

WIFE You are a clever one who always obeys my every word. I will find some lovely material and sew for you a talisman bag and a cap.

TARO KAJA For that I am most grateful.

WIFE Also if there is anything else at all that you might desire, just tell

me and I will see that your wish is fulfilled.

TARO KAJA I am increasingly and deeply grateful.

WIFE Arrange it so that none of me can be seen.

TARO KAJA As you say, Ma'am. (When he has finished arranging the brocade veil, he exits.)

MAN (He enters singing.)

**Neither the bells of twilight,
Nor the birds of parting,
Disturb
On nights slept alone.**

**The disturbance of the heart
Like tangled slender willow branches.
When, oh, when will I forget
The face surrounded by hair tangled in sleep?
Oh, how can I forget her lovely face?**

**When was the spring
I fell in love at first sight.
Never will I forget,
Our banquet of blossoms,
Our banquet of blossoms.
How hateful the pealing
of the temple bells
When finally I have a night
To spend with my most beloved.
Until the very dawn,
When'er we try to sleep,**

**Though it is still the depths of night,
Bong, bong, bong,
Bong, bong, bong,
They peal out,
Waking us anew each time they're struck.**

(Speaking.) By the three treasures. I had completely forgot that I left Taro Kaja sitting Zen meditation for me. Now I must hurry home. Here, here, Taro Kaja. I'm back home now. I am certain you have been waiting anxiously and that you must be most uncomfortable. First tell me, for it is a matter of great concern, did my witch of a wife come here? (The WIFE shakes the veil back and forth in a gesture of negation.) What's that? You say she did not come here? Oh, how happy, how happy I am. That was my only worry, so I am most relieved to hear that she did not come here. Well, I must tell you, Hanago had many words of praise for you. She said that as they say, the voice of a nightingale among the blossoms has a fragrance greater than any flower and that one should always hire wise servants and never make them associate with the lowly. And she praised your further for your gentle manners saying how wise I was to send you as my messenger. Consider yourself a happy man. Well now, I have no one else to tell about my night of love. I would like to tell you a bit about it, but I am too embarrassed to speak about it face to face. While I realize how uncomfortable it may be, will you keep that brocade one for a bit longer and listen to me. (The WIFE nods vigorously with the brocade veil.) Oh, I must say, how happy I am. If that is the case, I will now tell you about it. First I went to the front of the house and putting my ear to the door, I heard Hanago singing,

**Now the time of twilight
Has passed.
As I wait eager to see**

**He who does not come,
Even though others may
Blame him,
It is never him but myself alone I blame.**

**What she meant by this is that even though it may be the slander
of others that keeps me from coming, she only blames herself for my
absence. Then I tried to open the side panel door, she sang,
The wind blows toward me through the pines,
I lower the light in my lamp.
At such a lonely time as this,
If only my love would come!**

**She even called such a rough man as me her love. So I tapped
lightly on the side panel door, and she sang,
Even when a water bird taps lightly on my door,
I am flushed with excitement.**

**What she meant by this is that even when a bird known as a water
bird comes and taps on her side panel door, thinking even the bird
might be me, her heart is all aflutter. Unable to bear the suspense
any longer, I pounded loudly on the door and she cried out, "Who is
there?" Thinking that she had no reason to wonder who it might be,
I sang,**

**On a rainy night such as this,
Who else would suffer such a drenching?
Does this mean that the one who asks,
"Who is there?"
Is waiting for two different people?**

**Then I heard the patter of feet and the panel door creaked loudly
as it flew open. Wondering who it might be, I saw Hanago appear.
Without a word, she ran to me and clung to the sash at my waist,
singing,
He who wears a slender sash on slender hips,
Is not one who should tease his love**

And play foolish tricks.

Then as it was the first time we had seen each other in such a long time, she begged me to come inside. She took this rough pine-branch-like hand of mine in that delicate maple-leaf-like hand of hers and led me all the way into her innermost room. When we got there, she asked whether she should begin by telling me her complaints or by relating all the things that have happened since we last met. Then she assured me that she had no complaint against me, but that the number of letters she had sent me since her arrival in the capital were more numerous than the grains of sand on the ocean shore, so many that I could not possibly have had time to read them all, but only one single answer had she received from me. Saying that she thought of that single answering letter as myself, keeping it next to her breast both day and night, she showed me that letter, she sang,

**Like a clam am I,
For each time I look at this letter,
how damp my sleeves become,
how damp my sleeves.**

Then she said that was her sole complaint and I would hear no more, for now it was time for drinking, for which purpose she had wine and food brought forth. She offered me a cup of wine in token of our making up, and after drinking half of it, she gave it to me to finish. When I had finished drinking my half, she sang,

**Drink it down
Sip after sip,
Then we join together
For bedtime stories,
Luscious bedtime stories,
And I tremble in ecstasy,
purest ecstasy.**

This time she quaffed a full cup, and flashing a lovely smile, she

offered me another cupful. No picture could compare to the beauty of her face. I was so moved that I wanted to sing a song, but sing I could not from sheer fascination with the beauty of her face that increased the longer I gazed upon it, until finally I remembered my witch of a wife and found my voice singing,

When I gaze upon another lady,
Then look at my wife,
Then look at my wife,
The latter looks like nothing more
Than a foolish monkey
Crouching down in the mountain depths
Drenched by the rain.

When I finished singing, Hanago scolding me for railing against my wife making her sound as though her face is something other than human which could not be so. As we went on exchanging cup after cup, the night deepened and we dozed for a time. Then suddenly the crows began to caw loudly, and I said the dawn is already breaking. But she responded singing,

Make no sound,
But come closer, closer,
For the crows are cawing
Only at the moon.

So once again we drifted off to sleep, but before long, the eastern sky began to brighten and the light reflected on the paper doors. By the three treasures, I thought, I must hurry back home, so I sang,

Brushing back hair tangled in sleep,
I must now set out for home,
But take care to never
Allow your heart to change.

At that moment, Hanago rose quickly up and sang,
As her husband's body never changes,
Neither does the body of a woman,

**Whose love may increase,
But her heart will never change.
(He weeps.) Is she not most gracious, is she not? Then, feeling it
was truly time to leave, I sang,
From sleeves all wet with fresh dew,
I brush tears of parting,
From sleeves all wet with fresh dew,
I brush tears of parting,
I go my way with regrets as countless as
Sands left on the sea shore.
Oh, how parting fills my heart with pain.
As we go away, on our separate ways,
My sad heart draws me to turn back once more.
All I see, the way you went,
The moon alone, a waning, thin crescent.
Parting fills my heart with pain.**

**(He weeps.) Truly the saying that those who love must part while
those who do not love are bound together applies to me. I would
have dearly liked to remain and converse with her a bit more, but
when I thought of how it would bring trouble down upon not only my
head but yours as well if I were to be found out at a later date, I tore
myself brutally away and came home. And thus ends my story. Now,
come, come! Take off that brocade veil. (The WIFE shakes the veil
vigorously back and forth in refusal.) What's that? You refuse? So I
see you are angry at me for telling you such a long boring story. I do
understand how you must feel, but my witch of a wife may come in
here any minute and that would cause us trouble. So take off your
brocade veil quickly. (The WIFE shakes the veil even more
vigorously in adamant refusal.) What is this? How long do you think
you can stay like that? Take off the brocade veil this instant. (He
jerks the veil off his WIFE and thrown into a state of shock at seeing
her instead of TARO KAJA, his legs give out and he tries to sneak**

away on al fours.)

WIFE Hey, you rascal! What a fine night of Zen meditation you spent, what fine Zen meditation, I say! Where were you, where were you, where were you?!

MAN I was at a certain place.

WIFE What place?

MAN I went to Tsukushi to visit the five hundred disciples of the Buddha.

WIFE Oh, how angry, how angry I am. How could you travel to Tsukushi and back in one day and one night?! Will you not tell me the truth, will you not tell me the truth?

MAN What I said just now was a mistake.

WIFE Then out with it.

MAN The youngsters invited me to attend a linked-verse party with them.

WIFE There you go, still jabbering nonsense! Shall I wring your neck or shall I bite your head off!

MAN Is anybody about? Someone come and hold her down!

WIFE You lazy rascal, you'll not get away.

MAN Oh, forgive me, please forgive me.

WIFE (She chases him off.) I'll catch you yet, I'll catch you yet!

MAN Oh, forgive me, please forgive me.

WIFE I'll catch you yet, I'll catch you yet!

MAN Oh, forgive me, please forgive me.

WIFE I'll catch you yet, I'll catch you yet!

(Source: Kyogen Shusei, 375-379, Nogaku Shorin, Tokyo, 1974)