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Benjamin O. Davis Jr. Collection - Social

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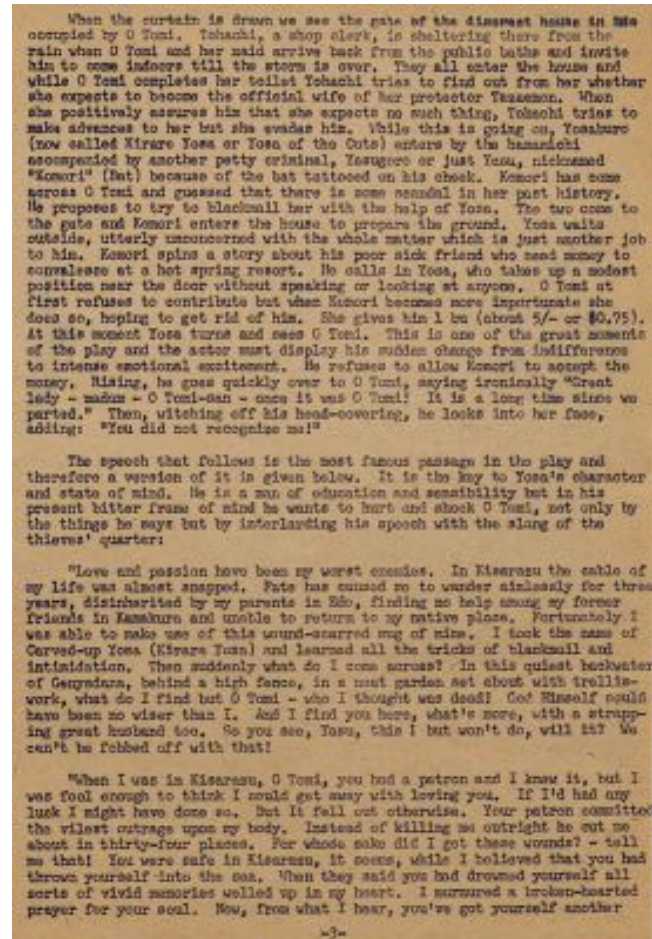
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When the curtain is drawn we see the gate of the discreet house in Edo occupied by O Tomi. Tohachi, a shop clerk, is sheltering there from the rain when O Tomi and her maid arrive back from the public baths and invite him to come indoors till the storm is over. They all enter the house and while O Tomi completes her toilet Tohachi tries to find out from her whether she expects to become the official wife of her protector Tazaemon. When she positively assures him that she expects no such thing, Tohachi tries to make advances to her but she evades him. While this is going on, Yosaburo (now called Kirare Yosa or Yosa of the Cuts) enters by the hanamichi accompanied by another petty criminal, Yasugoro or just Yasu, nicknamed "Komori" (Bat) because of the bat tattooed on his cheek. Komori has come across O Tomi and guessed that there is some scandal in her past history. He proposes to try to blackmail her with the help of Yosa. The two come to the gate and Komori enters the house to prepare the ground. Yosa waits outside, utterly unconcerned with the whole matter which is just another job to him. Komori spins a story about his poor sick friend who need money to convalesce at a hot spring resort. He calls in Yosa, who takes up a modest position near the door without speaking or looking at anyone. O Tomi at first refuses to contribute but when Komori becomes more importunate she does so, hoping to get rid of him. She gives him 1 bu (about 5/- or \$0.75). At this moment Yosa turns and sees O Tomi. This is one of the great moments of the play and the actor must display his sudden change from indifference to intense emotional excitement. He refuses to allow Komori to accept the money. Rising, he goes quickly over to O Tomi, saying ironically "Great lady - madam - O Tomi-san - once it was O Tomi! It is a long time since we parted." Then, witching off his head-covering, he looks into her face, adding: "You did not recognize me!"

The speech that follows is the most famous passage in the play and therefore a version of it is given below. It is the key to Yosa's character and state of mind. He is a man of education and sensibility but in his present bitter frame of mind he wants to hurt and shock O Tomi, not only by the things he says but by interlarding his speech with the slang of the thieves' quarter:

"Love and passion have been my worst enemies. In Kisarazu the cable of my life was almost snapped. Fate has caused me to wander aimlessly for three years, disinherited by my parents in Edo, finding no help among my former friends in Kamakura and unable to return to my native place. Fortunately I was able to make use of this wound-scarred mug of mine. I took the name of Carved-up Yosa (Kirare Yosa) and learned all the tricks of blackmail and intimidation. Then suddenly what do I come across? In this quietest backwater of Genyadana, behind a high fence, in a neat garden set about with trellis-work, what do I find but O Tomi - who I thought was dead! God Himself could have been no wiser than I. And I find you here, what's more, with a strapping great husband too. So you see, Yasu, this I but won't do, will it? We can't be fobbed off with that!

"When I was in Kisarazu, O Tomi, you had a patron and I knew it, but I was fool enough to think I could get away with loving you. If I'd had any luck I might have done so. But it fell out otherwise. Your patron committed the vilest outrage upon my body. Instead of killing me outright he cut me about in thirty-four places. For whose sake did I get these wounds? - tell me that! You were safe in Kisarazu, it seems, while I believed that you had thrown yourself into the sea. When they said you had drowned yourself all sorts of vivid memories welled up in my heart. I murmured a broken-hearted prayer for your soul. Now, from what I hear, you've got yourself another



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