"Gonza and Sukeju"

One Act, Two Scenes

by

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Name of Troupe: Zenshin-za

Name of the theatre: Teikoku-za in Kiriy City

Date of the first presentation:

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Synopsis

The episode is taken from Kyoho epoch in Edo period, that is, when the famous judge Obka Echizen-no-Kami was taking charge of jurisdiction in Edo city. The scene presents poor domiciles of Gonza and Sukeju, palanquin-bearers, who live side by side in a tenement-house separated only by a partition wall.

The curtain rises when Untetsu, Santetsu and Sukahachi are taking tea offered by Okan, Gonza's wife and sometimes they play with the monkey of Yosuke the monkey-shower, one of the habitants of the tenement-house. Today all the habitants there, are working together for the drainage of their well.
Sukeji, elder brother of Sukehachi comes there to hurry them all to be at the work again in order to finish it sooner. He asks then to Okan what is become of Gonza. The lazy Gonza is in "sabotage" and does not come to work. Just when Sukeju is furious against Gonza, the latter comes out leisurely. After a long dispute Sukeju has gone toward the well (They are so good friends that they are always in dispute), comes the landlord Rokurobe and Gonza is again scolded. On the other hand, when the members of the work come in front of Gonza's house, pulling the rope of drainage crying "Eh ho, eh ho!", a stranger (Hikosaburo from Osaka) appears and walks around and he runs, in the meantime, against the workers. As the latter are so excited that they push him down on the ground insulting "An embarrassing fellow". Rokurobe who are scolding Gonza, at this sight, crying "Don't do such a violence", scolds them and asks pardon to Hikosaburo. Hikosaburo hearing the name of the landlord Rokurobe, says that he has come just to see the latter for the following reason. His father named Hikobe lived once in this tenement-house but charged with a murder, was arrested and
was dead in prison. Hikosaburo claims the innocence of his father saying "My father is not such a person to steal the others by killing them". And he asks Rokurobe to help him in order to prove his father's innocence. Rokurobe is much vexed. Because it is the case already decided through the judgement of Mr. Ohoka, he would find no way to do. Hikosaburo, impatient, wants to run out at once to lodge his complaint directly.

Gonza and Sukeju who overhear the story at the side, murmur something between them and then come out to hold Hikosaburo by the hand and say "We will give you an advice". Asked by Rokurobe what is their advice, Gonza and Sukeju, after a long hesitation, confess at last that at the end of the eleventh moon of last year, they know something about the murder and according to them, it is certainly Kantaro the painter living at Toshima-cho who is the true criminal. Hearing this, Hikosaburo encouraged, thanks them heartily. Rokurobe on the contrary, making a glum face, says to them that for the amendment of their fault to have not declared such a fact until now, they must help Hikosaburo in presenting his petition.
Then Rokurobe seeks to find a good way, to succeed in the work. Rokurobe's plan at last hatch-
ed is as following. Rokusaburo will bring Gonza, Sukeju and Hikosaburo all tied up to the court and will lodge a complaint against them declaring that Hikosaburo proceeds to acts of violence long with Gonza and Sukeju in Rokurobe's house, accusing himself and the judge for a negligence in their judgement of Hikosaburo's father who was, after the latter, perfect innocent. That will be the first stage and then Gonza and Sukeju will bring a suit against Kantaro as the true murderer.

The moment when the three persons tied up are going to be led to the court, Okan, Gonza's wife sheds tears despite her daily quarrel with her husband and cries "Come back soon my dear". Suke-
hachi, Sukeju's younger brother, tries to give his brother all the money he has saying "I could be well off without eating one day or two". At last they go toward the court.

(End of the first scene)
The 2nd Scene

(Two months after the first scene)

When the curtain rises, in Gonza's house, they are in the midst of quarrel. The husband says "Go to buy for me a little Sake" and the wife replies "I have no money".

At the next door, the brothers Hikohachi and Hikoju, in their dispute, are handling a knife. Gonza, in spite of his own quarrel with his wife, comes to arrange with a passing neighbour, the dispute of Sukeju and Sukehachi and makes a judicious-like remark as follows. "You and me, we are now in the case of home confinement, if you dispute like this is known to the court, how are you going to be?" Sukeju replies, "That's just why I stayed in the house and I was cooking when this brother took advantage of my poor situation ..." Sukehachi does not yield to his brother and says "That is you who take advantage of your case to stay lazy... I think you do not know, that Kantaro once arrested is acquitted last evening". Gonza and Sukeju turning quite pale, ask if it is true and are anxious to have taken step
with such an uncertain accusation. The habitants of the
tenement-house also anxious say. "Indeed, this morning
Rokurobe and Hikosaburo called for, have presented
themselves to the court". And all of them, together,
are uneasy about Gonza and Sukeju's situation. There
arrives Kantaro in question saying, "Good morning".

Gonza and Sukeju ask him pardon to have
suspected him to be the murderer. Kantaro smiling
a curious smile, offers them a bottle of sake and
an accompaniment saying, "Thank you for your kind-
ness". He has come there to revenge on them in a
sarcastic manner. Sukehachi affended by Kantaro's
attitude, refuses the latter's present crying, "We
are not in need of such a thing". Gonza and Sukeju,
without affording to check their rising anger,
bursts into a big dispute. At the end, all the habitants
come to help them to beat Kantaro and ties him up.

There comes Yasuke the monkey-shower to announce
the arrival of officials. They think, "Now it is
a serious situation! They are come to arrest us,
because of our mistaken accusation." They are turned
pale. But in reality, it is to arrest Kantaro that
the officials have come. They say, "Kantaro was once
acquitted but his crime is now being verified, he is to be arrested". And they lead Kantaro just as he was tied up.

Gonza and Sukeju with all the habitants of the tenement-house, incapable of understanding the situation, stay vacantly. There arrive Rokurobe and Hikosaburo coming from the court in all smile. Rokurobe tell them what he has learned at the court concerning the second arrestation of Kantaro whose crime was made evident. According to Rokurobe, Kantaro had been acquitted once because Gonza and Sukeju's accusation was not sufficiently founded. But after his acquittal, without knowing he was watched by a spy, Kantaro, in arriving to his home, proceeded to burn out all the articles of evidence. This act was witnessed. Rokurobe tells them more over that Gonza and Sukeju will be in a short time recompensed by the judge.

Everybody takes pity on Hikobe who was dead in prison for a false charge. Then Rokurobe surprises them all in saying, "Our judge has pleased to give back us Hikobe".

The renowned judge Ohoka Echizenno-Kami,
smelling that Hikobe was not the murderer, was seeking the real criminal publishing the false news, that Hikobe was dead in prison. During Rokurobe is telling the tale, Hikobe accompanied by Hikosaburo appears and thanks them all.

All the habitants of the tenement-house, enthusiastically come around Hikobe crying, "Here again our Hikobe!"

The End

It is a comedy treating a popular life in Edo period taking for a subject their view-point of justice.