

**THE GREEN PARK: A NŌ PLAY**

(Based on the subplot of Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway*)

*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 upstage.  
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' 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 branch of elm with a few 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.

My wedding ring is loose,  
the fingers have grown so thin.

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

*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  
who acts this strangely?  
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, carrying red hassocks, enters and they kneel.)*

*Shite.* Experience changes that innocent oval  
to a face, lean, contracted, and hostile.  
The European War had tutored him:  
"There are no lasting emotions."

*(The Waki seats himself on the ground, down-stage right.)*

*Chorus.* The Great War put an end  
to the intoxication of poetry, extinguished the  
fluttering red-gold flame, infinitely ethereal  
and insubstantial; exposed the bestiality  
of eating and copulation, of  
eddy whims and vanities  
without lasting emotions.  
His comrade was killed and  
he felt nothing! (*Sashi*)

*Shite.* There died a myriad;  
and he too was destroyed,  
the man who finished  
a masterpiece  
at three in the morning (*Kudoki*)

and ran out to pace the streets,  
 who fasted one day  
 and drank another,  
 who devoured Shakespeare, Darwin  
 and Bernard Shaw.  
 He fought bravely  
 and won promotion.  
 He survived  
 to marry without love,  
 to experience  
 sudden thunderclaps of fear.

He did not want to die; life  
 was good – the sun was  
 hot, and he grasped  
 a greater truth.  
 But visions  
 plagued him;  
 an old woman's head  
 in the middle of a fern –  
 his dead friend  
 without mud or wounds.  
 Even the doctors pursued,  
 prescribing a hobby and exercise.  
 He had to escape  
 or they would get him.  
 He flung himself, vigorously,  
 violently, from the open  
 window  
 onto the area railings.

(*Uta*)

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  
 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.

(*Sashi*)

*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;  
the white and blue  
led by black branches –  
Sounds made harmonious  
with premeditation;  
the spaces between,  
significant as the sounds.  
And, in his delusion –  
the most exalted of mankind;  
the criminal  
who faced his judges;  
the victim  
exposed on the heights;  
the fugitive;  
the drowned sailor;  
the poet  
of the immortal ode;  
the lord  
who had gone from life to death.

*Shite.* His soul had been forced. *(Rongi)*  
An indescribable outrage.

*Chorus.* Closeness drew apart.  
Rapture faded and he was alone

*Shite.* It was more than a shilling  
thrown into the Serpentine.

*Chorus.* He had flung it all away.  
Death was defiance.

*Shite.* Fear no more  
the furious winter's rages.

*Chorus.* There is an embrace in death,  
an attempt to communicate.

*(The Shite lets down her hair. and removes her outer robe, revealing a tiered dress of gathered chiffon in greens and gold. Waki faces the audience for his speech.)*

*Waki.*           The Great War!  
                   This must have happened  
                   sixty years ago.  
 She cannot be that old.  
                   Can she be mad?  
 In this deepening light  
                   she seems  
 to grow younger,  
                   to move  
 as though her body  
                   relived the experience.

*(Machi-utai)*

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

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

My dress flames.  
                   My body burns.

*(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.

*(Waka)*

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

*(Kuri)*

A thing let drop every day  
                   in corruption, lies, chatter?