

A TRANSLATION :  
*FOLKS IN THE SACRED MOUNT*  
by Tadasu Izawa

Kaoru Abe

*Folks in the Sacred Mount* was written in 1950, and was first staged by *Bungakuza* theatrical company the following year. At that time it enjoyed a solid reputation among Japanese audiences and critics.

Presenting this play on British stage has always been the desire of Mr. Masahiko Arima, an actor and member of the theatrical company, *En*. Mr. Arima consequently requested this translation be made. The translation was completed for the occasion of the visit of Mr. Giles Brock, director of the British National Theatre, to Japan in November, 1987.

I would like to express my gratitude to Mr. Tadasu Izawa, the author of the play, who gave his ready consent to publish this translation here ; and to Miss Judy Vantrease, who greatly helped me with her advice. I am also grateful to Professor Kenji Oba of Meiji Gakuin University, who enabled me to become involved in this work.

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Characters: Hê  
 Min } *Immortals ; unmeasurably old*  
 Ching }  
 Tao *A page boy to them ; about 13*  
 Hosoya *Former First Lieutenant in the Japanese Army ; 23*  
 Doi *A Doctor of Science ; 38*  
 Honda *A labor delegate ; 35*  
 Flamingo *A female bird ; of uncertain age*

*The stage is what they call an abode of immortals. As usually seen in pictures in the southern school of Chinese paintings, high mountains with pointed peaks are stretching for miles. The small level ground on the center is where the immortal are living. Nearby is a furnace and on it is a steaming caldron. A 'go' board\* sits on a slightly elevated rock, stage left. There's not much except some rocks and alpine plant bushes. There is a shout right before the curtain raises. On a stool-like rock, stage left, Min is sitting on his knees. But he is headless. On his left side Hê is striking an impressive pose, holding his sword. He has just cut off Min's head, and it's on a rock nearby. Ching is watching them, on stage back, in a careless mood.*

Hê: (*Excited*) How was it? Cut marvelously?

Ching: Yes.

Hê: Now then, canst thou cut mine?

Ching: All right. The problem is, since I've never been a soldier like thee, I wonder if I can do a good job.

Hê: Doesn't matter. It's not up to thy skill, but this very blade. I've tempered it over and over again. . . .

Ching: For 850 years, I know, I know. I lavish praise upon thy effort.

Hê: Enough of that, Ching. Now give it a try. Thou canst see the difference in this blade.

Ching: Can I? Well, (*awkwardly holding the sword*) this way?

Hê: Better to use thy legs to brace thyself. Yes, that's right.

Hê *is about to sit down. Min's body squeezes up for him.*

Ching: Am I supposed to perform this with the shout as thou didst?

\*'go': Japanese board game of territorial possession and capture.

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Hê : It's not necessary, though, it helps thee concentrate thy strength. I remember executing enemy generals and my soldiers who violated martial law, a long time ago, with a gallant "yo-ho!" Shouting cheers lifts our spirits anyway.

Ching : Maybe so, but such is not the case with me. I don't think I can do it with a gallant shout. Well, art thou ready?

Hê : Anytime. (Closes his eyes).

*Ching raises the sword over his head many times, but he has no confidence. Meanwhile Hê, waiting with his eyes closed, becomes sleepy. He starts to nod his head leaning on Min's headless body. Seeing that, Ching goes to the furnace, carrying the sword under his arm, and takes off the lid of the caldron. He stirs it with the sword.*

Hê : (*Dodged by headless Min, wakes up*) I'm ready.

Ching : (*Rushing back*) Just watching my secret medicine. Now, here we go! (*With a feeble shout he tries to cut Hê's head off. His attempt is unsuccessful, and Hê's head remains on his body.*)

Hê : Art thou finished?

Ching : Most certainly, I am. It seems, however, that we weren't successful.

Hê : Or maybe we were too successful. When a blade cuts too well -- it happens all the time -- a head doesn't even fall off from the body. (*Reaching his arms to his head*) Hum, no good, it's not cut.

Ching : The blame is on my skill.

Hê : I thought it would be easy for anyone. Why should I not, then, try it by myself?

Ching : Marvelous idea! That's thy specialty. But wilt thou oblige me and cut my head off first? Who else could take care of me when thou art not around?

Hê : Why dost thou not kill thyself with this sword?

Ching : Kill myself? My mind can't comprehend such savage business. Having never been in military service, I don't know the manner of it.

Hê : Thou needst a lot of looking after. Come up here and get thyself ready.

Ching : (*Sits down on a rock. Headless Min, again, squeezes up for him.*) Is this all right?

Hê : Don't stand like that. Thou art bent over too much!

*Blackout. Someone bursts into laughter. Lights on. Laughter continues. Hê had cut off Ching's head perfectly. Two headless bodies, namely Min's and Ching's, are the proof of it. They are sitting on their knees. Hê brandishes his sword, spins around, and lands on*

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*his rear end. Min's and Ching's heads are each on a small rock. One at each side of the stage. They are laughing together.*

Hê: What's so funny?

Min: Ha-ha, the way thou fallst.

Ching: I'm still alive with my head cut off, ha-ha.

Hê: (*Getting up*) Keep laughing. (*Picks up his sword and looks at it regretfully*) Hum...It has surely cut their heads off, but it didn't take their lives. Needs more tempering, perhaps? Is it a failure?

*Min's and Ching's body, stand up, go behind where their heads are placed. In a moment, it happens that their body and head get stuck together.*

Min: Thy 850-year-effort, actually, has come to nothing, my old Hê.

Ching: Wait, wait. That also means, optimistically, our elixir of life is a real thing. Not so bad?

Hê: Happy-go-lucky folks! No wonder you've never successfully killed yourselves. You lack seriousness.

Min: Take it easy, Hê. I was impressed with how well thy blade cut!

Ching: Oh, impressive indeed! See, our heads were literally cut off-- sailed toward the rocks over there. Very nice try.

Hê: Say as you like, nasty folks. You deceived me. Made me believe in my success. However, I'm almost there. In another hundred years, very soon, my sword shall be a perfect one. I shall take your life in a minute then.

Min: That's the spirit. I'll expect it.

Ching: Another hundred years? I don't mind if it's tomorrow. What is worth doing is worth doing promptly, don't they say? Ha ha, ha...

Hê: I'll remember that. Thou shalt see and get scared when the day comes. I'll take my leave and work on it. (*Leaves angrily.*)

Min: Hope he won't show up again until that day, if it really comes.

Ching: As naive as he is, he could tell we practiced magic.

Min: Seems so. At least he will stop hanging around. Won't bother us for a while.

*Begins a sound of tempering.*

Ching: Hear that? He is starting again.

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Min : Well, how is thy medicine doing?

Ching : Ah, yes. It is almost ready. I've just tasted it.

Min : Is it possible that I may taste it as well?

Ching : Most certainly.

*They go to the furnace. Ching fills two bowls, gives one to Min.*

Min : I do wonder what this tastes like. *(They sip at it.)*

Ching : Getting much more stronger?

Min : Er, not really.

*A roar of an airplane in the distance.*

Ching : I just remembered.

Min : What?

Ching : Didst thou hear that?

Min : A regular flight to India?

Ching : Yes.

Min : So what?

Ching : I think *(pointing to the caldron)* uh. . . . We still need someone to work on this. What dost thou think?

Min : I agree. Better to get someone more reliable than that boy.

Ching : The more, the better, eh? I know certain individual on board today's flight that I think might be useful.

Min : But no Westerners, I mean, blond hair and blue eyed kinds of people, please. They don't go with, how to put it, the atmosphere, or the whole idea, of this Sacred Mount.

Ching : Don't worry about that. They're Japanese.

Min : Japanese, again? The boy, I remember, is also from that country, isn't he? Dost thou still hold ill feelings toward. . . .

Ching : No, I don't, but a foreigner is more suitable to be pushed around. One from thy own country, I think, thou mightst be attached to.

Min : Maybe so. Is there anyone special on board today?

Ching : *(Cautiously looking around, whispers to Min in a low voice.)*

Min : Indeed? That must be something. Most welcome news lately. So, let us. . . .

Ching : And that doctor may want an assistant.

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Min: Quite so. Would be helpful.

Ching: Fortunately, another Japanese happens to be on board. He shall come in handy.

Min: That is good. I'll leave it in thy hands.

Ching: Well, the airplane has just passed. Let's see. (*Listens, his hand held to his ear.*)  
This direction. Shall we pull it back?

*Ching jumps onto a rock, quickly, set stage left. Stirs the air as if he was drawing something near to him. The roar of the airplane gradually gets nearer.*

Min: Art thou doing it at the usual spot, I mean, at that precipice?

Ching: Would be most convenient for us. (*Shouts*) Yo-ho! (*Immediately there's an explosion in the distance. Fire and smoke can be seen. The airplane has crashed against the precipice and dozens of people have died a tragic death.*)

Min: Hurry up. We need to take out their bodies before they get burned. Remember the last time? Took us much effort to restore the boy who got burned so badly.

Ching: Why not go now? (*Jumps down from the rock. Each of them quickly sits astride his wand and makes a flight to the place the disaster took place.*)

*Pause. Hê can be heard working on the blade. He comes on when he is finished. A big yellow butterfly is flying by.*

Hê: There! (*Cuts the butterfly into halves. Each half flies away in a different direction. He watches it with full satisfaction.*) So there! (*Cuts his own head off. Nervously tries to pull his head apart to make sure. Finding it's still there, he leaves disappointedly.*)

*Lieutenant Hosoya and the boy, Tao, come on together. They are bringing hand baskets full of herbs and stones. Hosoya is in military uniform, but his hairdo is very different from normal. He had his head shaved, like Tao, except for certain small parts. This is what they call ancient Chinese boy style, often seen in old Chinese paintings.*

Hosoya: There go the greats. What's up?

Tao: They are playing 'go' this afternoon. Chang of Zhanso is giving a challenge to them.

Hosoya: Wonder why they don't get sick of it.

Tao: Nothing much to do here, you know? It's much more complicated and deeper than

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any other games. Even though they've already tried all the moves, it's still a better way to kill time, I guess.

Hosoya: Is that so? I don't know how to play either 'go' or 'shogi'\*. Didn't even try to learn them when I was on the battlefield, which is where one usually does.

Tao: Ha, ha, ha. You'll change your mind when you get bored of living here. I'll bet you're gonna start playing 'go' soon.

Hosoya: Positive?

Tao: I am. For now the greats are crazy about mixing up a poison, and that's why they let us look for rare herbs and stones. But I'm sure we will be running out of them in the near future.

Hosoya: Really?

Tao: Oh, yes. You see, there aren't as many as there seems to be. In another two hundred years, we'll have picked up all of them.

Hosoya: Another two hundred years?

Tao: In only two hundred years or so.

Hosoya: Only, you would say?

Tao: I really don't know what to do about you. Now that you've been given the elixir or life you're one of the immortal folks. Almost ten years, eh?

Hosoya: Seems it's been only twenty minutes.

Tao: That's the way I used to feel, too. I was born in the era of Han -- the Emperor Wu's reign.

Hosoya: Yes?

Tao: You have no idea when Han Wu-ti reigned over the Chinese, do you?

Hosoya: Er....I'm kind of allergic to Asian history. Don't know for sure....a thousand years ago or so?

Tao: No you idiot, twice as long. Two thousand years ago.

Hosoya: Ah. You've been living for two thousand years! Quite an achievement. I'm impressed.

Tao: It's not something very special. No big deal, you know, for we are supposed to live forever here.

Hosoya: Are we? H'm....

Tao: Seems you don't yet really feel you have an endless life.

Hosoya: You said it.

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\*'Shogi': Japanese chess. The game is played on a chessboard of 81 squares by two players with 20 chessmen each. (11 pieces and 9 pawns.)

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Tao: No wonder you don't. Had the same feeling when I first came here. Had no idea about not dying, either. Slowly but surely I came to realize it, but only after living for two thousand years.

Hosoya: Good for you.

Tao: Not really. It's very weird.

Hosoya: Hmm. Is it?

Tao: Quite so. You'll learn. And you'll start playing 'go' before that time I'm sure.

Hosoya: You think so?

Tao: In two hundred years or so. I'd rather hope by that time, though, the greats would make up a poison that can take our life.

Hosoya: A poison able to kill an immortal?

Tao: Yes. They are working on an experiment here -- see, this bubbling stuff -- and these stones and herbs are raw materials.

Hosoya: My word! So people here are also trying hard to die? The same old story.

Tao: What? That sounds strange. I heard people there are making efforts to live longer.

Hosoya: It's not true. "The business of *the samurai*\* is to die" was our philosophy in the military. I spent most of the time disciplining my mind to be able to throw my life away anytime.

Tao: That doesn't make sense. When I was in that world, everyone, the emperor himself included, was desperately trying to get the elixir or life.

Hosoya: Were they? Well, even though I trained myself to face death, it was still not easy to picture myself actually dying.

Tao: Live some two thousand years, and you'll find yourself ready to die.

Hosoya: Hmm.... Is that so?

Doi *and* Honda *come on*.

Honda: Good! There's someone.

Doi: (*Appearing authoritative, even in an emergency like this*) Really? Looks like a Japanese soldier, doesn't he?

Honda: Excuse me?

Hosoya: Yes, sir.

Honda: I am glad you're here. You are Japanese?

\**samaurai*: Japanese warrior

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Hosoya : Yes, I am. (*Notices that Honda and Doi are staring at his head.*) Oh, this might look different. My master just told me to....

Honda : I see, um, where is the nearest town from here? Could you show us the way?

Hosoya : Well, I really don't know. Got any idea?

Tao : Don't know, Wenhao, maybe. Actually we've never been to any towns.

Honda : How, then, do you get groceries and stuff?

Tao : You mean food?

Honda : Yes.

Tao : (*Pointing to the air*) It's right here.

Honda : Huh?

Tao : Vapor.

Hosoya : We live on air.

Honda : Stop kidding, please. We're in a hurry. We don't have time to waste.

Doi : Didn't you notice an explosion in that direction? We just had an accident. We lost our radar in the fog, and after wandering about for an hour, our airplane crashed into the mountain.

Honda : Heaven saved us. It's nothing but a miracle. We got out without a scratch. Found ourselves lying on grass, about twenty minutes ago, and we just started walking.

Doi : A pitiful sight -- all of the others, twenty-three people, were burned to death.

(*Tao whispers in Hosoya's ear. Hosoya, looks doubtful at first, but then begins to understand what happened.*)

Honda : Anyway we are on urgent business.

Hosoya : Going to India?

Honda : Yes, I was supposed to go to Calcutta today.

Hosoya : The Independence Movement, eh?

Honda : No, India declared independence last year. My destination is Zürich, Switzerland. I'm attending a labor relations conference under government sanction. Maybe you have heard about me in the newspaper. I'm Honda, a labor delegate. I must get there by the day after tomorrow.

Hosoya (*to Doi*) : Are you going to go Switzerland, too?

Doi : No, to Copenhagen. The International Toxicology Society is holding a conference on the 10 th, and they are inviting me. Here is my name card. (*Gives it to Hosoya, but it's written in English.*)

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Hosoya : T-A-M-E-O D-O-I? Mr. Doi?

Doi : I should have made one in Japanese, sorry about that. I'm on the faculty of the pharmaceutical department.

Hosoya : Of Imperial University?

Doi : As you know, it hasn't been called the Imperial University since the war.

Hosoya : What? The war, the Greater East Asia War, has ended? Can I trust you?

Doi : And the word 'the Greater East Asia War' also went out of use. 'World War II' is what we call it. Ha, ha, ha.

Honda : Seems you are quite ignorant of what's going on lately. Well, I don't blame you. You are living far up in the mountains.

Doi : Why then you are here?

Hosoya : For the same reason you are here. A fog set in when I was making a scouting flight. I was led around here and there, and finally crashed into a wall of rock. The engine caught fire and I was burned to death.

Honda : Died in the fire?

Hosoya : Yes. And Min, one of the greats, recovered me with his supernatural arts.

Honda : His what?

Tao : It's the same with you. By their arts, you are invited here.

Doi : Arts? What do you mean 'arts'?

Tao : The supernatural arts of an immortal.

Hosoya : That is to say, magic powers.

*Honda and Doi, frustrated, walk up and down speaking to each other in a low voice. Hê comes on, quickly, holding a sword.*

Hê : I can make it this time, that's for sure. Does anyone want . . . Shall I lay a blow on thy head?

Honda : What are you talking about? Cut my throat? You capitalist! (*Becomes aware of the sword*) What the hell are you doing? Is there no opportunity to negotiate? Violence is not the way to handle this dispute.

Hê : No matter. I'm just trying my sword. I must succeed this time. Here I go! (*Cuts Honda, who is trying to run away, aslant through the shoulder. Doi loses his composure and screams. Actually nothing happens.*) No! Not again. This is terrible. I must start over again. (*Hê leaves, keeping his eyes fixed on the sword. He doesn't even notice people around him.*)

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Tao : Now do you understand? That's exactly what I thought. Now that you've given the elixir of life, you are immortal like us. You don't die even if you get your head cut off, and you'll never get hungry again. You don't have to get married, nor have children.

Doi : Why on earth do we have to . . . .

Tao : Don't ask me. Maybe the greats, I mean, Ching and Min, are planning something.

Honda : Dr. Doi, shall we climb down the mountain anyway?

Doi : Yes, let's hurry up.

Tao : There's no use doing that.

Honda : Will you shut up! I'm losing my patience with you.

*Leave Doi and Honda.*

Tao : They will be back in three minutes at the most. Ha, ha, ha.

Hosoya : They did say the war is over, didn't they?

Tao : So what?

Hosoya : So what? . . . . It's strange. I find myself thinking "so what" when I look back on it now. War seems like no big deal any more. I never thought I'd feel this way. Do you think it is because of the elixir of life?

Tao : Probably. It's good to realize that, though. You are wiser than you used to be.

Hosoya : Am I? *(Stands on the top of a rock. Looking at the faraway lofty peaks, he engages in a series of long, deep breaths. Such actions are characteristic of immortals.)*

Tao : Is that relaxing?

Hosoya : This reminds me of my military days. Just like practicing shouting commands.

Tao : So military life and immortal life have something in common?

Hosoya : That's right. The one thing in common is that both are more than a human being can bear.

*A flamingo flies down to the stage.*

Flamingo : Excuse me? Is this Min and Ching's residence?

Tao : Yes.

Flamingo : I'm a messenger sent by Gao of Shenchao.

Tao : He must be a man of very strange likings. How come he keeps such a bizarre bird as you?

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Flamingo: Isn't that rude? I am a flamingo.

Tao: I don't care who you are. What I'm saying is how you look. You know, the cranes those immortal folks keep have always been decent white ones.

Flamingo: Ha, ha, ha, that's the reason I'm his favorite. He likes pink. He wanted something very different. A white one, he said, is too common.

Tao: And your beak is such a strange shape. Awfully bent.

Flamingo: It's more convenient to pick up small fish in the Nile with.

Tao: In the Nile? You're in Shenchao, aren't you.

Flamingo: I had no choice. I was caught by Gao on my way home from the Emperor Hsuan-tsung's garden....

Tao: Uh-huh, so you were staying there in the Tang period.

Flamingo: Yes. I was sent to the Emperor from Persia, you know, as a tribute. But, (*quietly*) I had a boyfriend in my hometown, I wanted to see him so badly.

Tao: You had a boyfriend?

Flamingo: Oh, come on. Anyway, I pretended to be sick and didn't eat anything for two weeks. Assuming that I was ill, they stopped trimming my wings the way they used to do so that I couldn't fly away. I kept standing on one leg. Then one day when my wings got long enough to fly, I flew away. I was chased by eagles and ospreys, and could hardly get away. At last I reached the border town.

Tao: And it was there you happened to draw the immortal's attention, eh?

Flamingo: Exactly. He caught me and stuffed the elixir of life into my mouth. That is the end of my story, you know. I've endured for more than a thousand years since then. Too late to see my boyfriend.

Tao: Oh, I'm sure he took his last chirp a thousand years ago.

Hosoya: Why don't you stop teasing her, Tao, and let her get to the point? She's a messenger.

Tao: I know, but it's very rare to have such a guest. Maybe only once in a great while. We've got to make the full use of this chance and enjoy each other.

Flamingo: Definitely. I've been missing a chat like this for a long time. You are obnoxious, but quite enjoyable.

Tao: Please, please....

Flamingo: Dear me!

Tao: What's wrong?

Flamingo: Oh, nothing.

Tao: You're an odd one.

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Flamingo : Good gracious!

Hosoya : Feeling sick?

Flamingo : *(With an awkward smile)* No, no. I just....

Tao : Just what?

Flamingo : Is there any shade around here?

Tao : Need to hide yourself? How about the shade of that rock.

Flamingo : Looks perfect. Please don't follow me, OK?

Tao : What's the matter?

Flamingo : Oh, it's nothing. *(Whispers to Tao)*

Tao : I see.

Hosoya : What's that?

Flamingo : Oh, no.

Tao : She's going to lay eggs.

Hosoya : Um....

Flamingo : Oh, my, you're embarrassing me.

Hosoya : Don't be embarrassed. It's quite natural for a bird.

Flamingo : It's really weird. Ever since I had the elixir of life, I've been laying eggs all through the year, one or two a day. Before then I used to do that only in spring. Strange, isn't it? Anyway, I need to be excused. *(Goes behind the rock.)*

Tao : She's an odd bird, right?

Hosoya : Cute, though, you must admit.

Tao : Um....

*The flamingo pops her head out of the rock.*

Flamingo : I almost forgot to give you your message.

Tao : First things first. Take your time.

Flamingo : Thanks. *(Withdraws)*

*Pause. Hosoya, having nothing to do, walks up and down. Tao is sitting mindlessly by the furnace, holding his legs with his arms.*

Hosoya : Shall we play 'go' or something?

Tao : Ha, ha. Now you wanna play it. Ok, let's play. I'll teach you how to make a move.

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Hosoya: You were right. I felt like playing it when I saw this 'go' board.

Tao: Good. Let's do it.

*They begin to play 'go' sitting down on a rock where the board is placed. A few minutes later, Honda and Doi come on.*

Doi: Shall we take a short break here? *(Sits down)* Tired?

Honda: No, not at all.

Doi: Neither am I. My sense of professional obligation is keeping me going.

Honda: Exactly. It raises my spirits as well. Perhaps this is how one feels after a hair raising adventure. Anyway I think we've come down a long way.

Doi: That's right. My ears tell me the atmospheric pressure seems to be getting much higher. We've climbed down at least 6,600 ft. in elevation.

Honda: Is that so? Very scientific comment--most like you, Dr. Doi. So we are getting to the foot of the mountain. *(Notices the furnace, then looks around.)* Hum, isn't this where we were?

Doi: What? What do you mean?

Honda: Look at the furnace. This is where we met those weirds.

Doi: I'm afraid it is. Have we kept going round and round for half a day? Oh, what shall we do? *(Takes off his hat and finds his hair has been partly shaved and done just like Hosoya's, with a knot on the top.)* What the hell is this?

Honda: What? *(Looks at Doi's head, and takes off his hat.)* Why....!

*Dazed, they slowly sit on the ground. Min and Ching come on, flying, on their wands.*

Ching: That sixty-third move thou madest on the right side of the 'go' board....

Min: Was what?

Ching: Was the same one thou tried on thd 20 th of August, a thousand and twenty years ago, when thou wast playing with Chang.

Min: That's not true. Seems alike at a look, but it's not, indeed. The move I made was 5-5-3. That's the difference.

Ching: There, those Japanese are already waiting for us.

Min: Good, good.

Honda: What do you want with us? I have to go to Zürich by the day after tomorrow. A serious matter. Whether or not the Japanese labor will join the international labor

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movement rests upon it.

Ching : The day after tomorrow? It's been half a year since that labor conference thou wast supposed to attend was over. Ha, ha, ha.

Doi : (*Pointing to his hairdo*) And this . . . . I can't stand such an insult.

Min : It's not meant to insult thee. Just an earmark to tell a worker from a master.

Honda : A worker? A master? That makes a perfect employment relationship, doesn't it? If that's the case, according to law, you . . . .

Ching : According to our law, namely, the law of the supernatural. Dost thou not see the miracle? We recovered your body. You saw the corpse. If not for us, you two would have been like the rest of the passengers. Do you understand? Ha, ha, ha.

Min : Actually, as you already know, it's too miraculous in it's effect. The elixir of life we made turned out to be literally real.

Ching : I've lived almost three thousand years only to find there's nothing much enjoyable, and I've been thinking about quitting being an immortal lately. I heard, er, thou hast just made up a deadly poison.

Doi : Who said that? Wonder who let it out. It's an international top secret. I can't tell you. It would seriously effect the whole world.

Min : Don't talk nonsense. We are omniscient.

Ching : We know almost everything in detail, but have pretended to be ignorant for the honor of thee. Let me tell thee something. The poison is thirty-two trillion times as effective as potassium cyanide. A.C.Z., is it called?

Doi : How did you know?

Ching : Ah, only three buckets of it is enough to kill every creature in the Pacific Ocean, from whale to plankton.

Doi : (*Trying not to cry*) Yes, that's right. Two test tubes and a bottle of medicine -- the kind sold at any small drugstore -- that's all you need. What a scary thought! That's why I consulted with reliable world-famous scientists in absolute secrecy. And a meeting will be held from the 10th in Copenhagen.

Min : I know. That meeting was over almost six months ago, actually, and was cancelled because of thy absence.

Doi : Is that true? They must have thought I decieved them.

Ching : Not really. On the contrary everyone felt relieved to hear the news of thy death -- an inventor of such a dangerous poison.

Doi : Ah! (*Buries his face in his hands and cries.*)

Min : Well, can we have the poison in thy right breast pocket?

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Doi : Oh, he knows everything.

Ching : Remember? We are the immortals and know the supernatural arts.

Honda : Why on earth did you bring me here? All you wanted was Dr. Doi's poison, isn't it? Why me? I have nothing to do with this business.

Min : Stop complaining! Thou wilt know. Every single deed we do has got a reason. Nothing shall end in vain.

Ching : Come now, hand me the medicine. All right, um, seems like flour. It certainly doesn't seem that poisonous.

Min : Let's see, it's enough to poison the whole Yangzi.

Ching : Well, shall we try it?

Min : Sure. *(To Hosoya and Tao, who are playing 'go')* Come here, folks. *They come down.*) Serve this poison in a bowl. Do you want to join us?

Tao : Could I die?

Ching : Hopefully.

Tao : Then I want to. What about you, Mr. Hosoya?

Hosoya : I'd like to die, too.

Tao : So we need four bowls?

Ching : *(to Doi and Honda)* How about....

*Doi and Honda shake their head.*

Ching : Then it's four. Alright, I'll fill your bowls. *(Gives bowls filled with the poison to the others.)*

Min : Did everyone receive one? If this works out, you must be something, Dr. Doi. Shall we drink?

*Min drained it in one gulp, each of the others follows him.*

Ching : Doesn't taste so bad.

Min : Kind of nice to the palate, and the aroma isn't bad at all, either....

Tao : Isn't this a little bit bitter?

Min : That's why it suits my taste. Thou art too young to appreciate this taste.

Hosoya : Nothing's happened so far. Are we supposed to be sleepy? Er, I think I'm getting sleepy.

Doi : No. You are supposed to die even before you get sleepy, because it affects the

A TRANSLATION :  
*FOLKS IN THE SACRED MOUNT* by Tadasu Izawa

central nervous system.

Ching : How long does it take, then?

Doi : Only a minute. But you aren't normal. I'll show you how it works for a real human being. (*Grabs the bottle that Min is holding, gulps down the poison and faints on the ground.*)

*One . . . . five . . . . ten seconds passes. Finding out nothing happened, Doi takes some more. Makes no difference. Jumps up and throws the bottle against the ground.*

Doi : Woe to me! I, myself, have become like one of you!

*Min and Ching look at each other. Tao goes up to the rock to play 'go' with Hosoya again. Doi squats down, dejectedly, by the side of Honda.*

Min : Turned out just as we expected.

Ching : It sure did. Great are the supernatural arts . . . . we are still alive and well.

Min : And that was our last resort, I'm sorry to say.

Ching : Nay, at least we have a poison specialist here ; he shall keep up with his research. (*To Doi and Honda*) Do you understand? In this sacred mountain, Mt. K'unlun, there have been herbs and stones of a rare kind from ancient times. By extracting essence from these, we have created the elixir of life. So, it is my hope you can make up an antidote, I mean, a deadly poison, in the same way. I hope this is agreeable with you. (*To Honda*) And thou shalt help him. If you have any questions, don't hesitate to ask. (*Points to Tao and Hosoya.*) Is it time to go?

Min : Pao must be waiting for us. It will be a hopeless 'go' game for him, though. I'll beat him, ha, ha, ha. (*They leave, flying, on their wands.*)

*The moon slowly rises. Can hear Hê, exhausted, tempering his sword. Doi and Honda are lost in thought. A shrill laughter. Flamingo springs out of the shade.*

Flamingo : Ho-ho, I've got two. No wonder it took me longer today. Two. Wanna take care of them? They are right there. Sure you can eat them. But no use sitting on them, you know, they're unfertilized eggs. . . . See you later. (*Leaves*)

Tao : Without leaving the message!?

Hosoya : Oh. . . . goodness. . . . We really aren't human beings any more, are we?

Kaoru Abe

*(Makes a move)*

Tao: No mercy, as well as no death, eh? *(Makes a move. This is to be repeated till the end of the play)*

Hosoya: What about the poison?

Tao: Immortal …… that's the name of the game.

Hosoya: How about the scholar?

Tao: He's been given the elixir of life.

Hosoya: What about the labor delegate, then?

Tao: Drank it, too.

Hosoya: Too late to kick and struggle,

Tao: The greats twist us around their little finger.

Hosoya: As long as we are on this mountain!

Tao: That's our destiny!

Hosoya: Where there's no hope!

Tao: No, not any!

Hosoya: Immortal? How interesting!

Tao: All at the greats' sweet pleasure!

Hosoya: To hell with them!

*Sound made by 'go' pieces and board continues a while. And then....*

—Curtain—

翻訳の底本として飯沢匡、『崑崙山の人々』（『現代日本戯曲選集』第12巻、白水社）を使用した。初演年代等は、『演劇百科大事典』（平凡社）に拠るものである。