The Stolen Sword

By Neal Barth

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SYNOPSIS

Here is a classic children's tale told with Japanese Kabuki theatre techniques. Gosho-no-Goodo, an evil Samurai, has stolen the sword of Subi-Sumo, the good Samurai. Subi would not care that much because he'd rather paint than do battle, but unfortunately, he must retrieve his sword at all costs. To a member of the Samurai, a stolen sword is a disgrace. If he doesn't recover it, Subi cannot marry his love, a princess named Kyo-no-Imi. As Subi and his two servants go on a quest for the sword, they meet a witch posing as an old woman. They help her and she thanks Subi with a potion which she says will give him strength and courage. Only after Subi fights and eventually wins back his sword and the hand of the Princess does he discover his strength came from within and the potion was merely water.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(4m, 3w, 2 flexible, extras)

TARO: A servant of Subi-Sumo's.

DOJI: His wife.

ICHI: *(Flexible)* Another servant of Subi-Sumo's.

SUBI-SUMO: The Good Samurai.

KYO-NO-IMI: A Princess.

GOSHO-NO-GOODO: The Evil Samurai.

GOODI-NO-ABIT: *(Flexible)* Gosho's servant.

O NAKA: A good witch.

KOJOMURA: The Shogun.

THIEVES/CREW: Several. They perform a stylized battle and will also assist in moving scenery. Two serve as Subi's horse. All should be dressed in black.

(DOUBLING POSSIBLE: Doji may double as O Naka.)

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

Scene 1: Subi-Sumo's home.
Scene 2: Gosho's hideout.
Scene 3: Somewhere in the forest.
Scene 4: The Chase Scene, first a mountain then a river.
Scene 5: A chamber in the Shogun's palace.

Performance Time: About 45 minutes.

THE STOLEN SWORD

SCENE ONE

(AT RISE: ICHI and TARO alone on stage at Subi-Sumo's home. They are looking for their master's sword. From offstage we hear…)

DOJI: Taro! Taro, come here immediately!
TARO: What is it, wife?
DOJI: *(Entering.)* Do I not have enough to worry about? Must I always oversee your actions?
TARO: What are you talking about?
DOJI: The mess you left in the kitchen. It looks like a swine fed there ... now, return and clean it.

(DOJI nudges TARO with her broom.)

TARO: Ohhh, careful

(THEY exit.)

ICHI: Doji, I need Taro to help me.
DOJI: *(Offstage.)* He first must clean the kitchen.
ICHI: But our master has need of him.
DOJI: *(Offstage.)* Only after he helps me.
TARO: *(Offstage.)* Now, Doji…
DOJI: *(Offstage.)*You be quiet.
ICHI: Doji, I insist. Taro must help me now. Later you may have him. *(Goes off to retrieve Taro.)*
DOJI: *(Offstage. Crying loudly.)* I never get any help. My life is nothing but work, work, work … *(Cries.)*

(ICHI enters with TARO.)

ICHI: Your wife, Taro, is a trial.
TARO: Yes, I know, but she is my wife ...

ICHI: Well, you can return to her later. Now you must find our master's sword. You must find the sword, Taro.
TARO: Why must it be me to find the sword, Ichi? If you would also look, it might be found sooner.
ICHI: Am I not head servant?
TARO: Servant, yes. Head, I am not sure. Too often you act as though I were the servant and you the master.

(TARO is clouted on the head by ICHI.)

ICHI: You would say such a thing about your friend Ichi?

(ICHI clouts TARO again.)

TARO: Oh, ow ...
ICHI: Ichi, who has taught you everything .. *(Clouts HIM again.)*
TARO: OOOhhhh ... ouch ...
ICHI: Ichi, who is your salvation *(Clout.)* your friend *(Clout.)* your --
TARO: ... beater ...
ICHI: What?
TARO: Leader ... leader ... you are my leader ...
ICHI: Yes, I suppose I am. Now look for our master's sword.
TARO: Yes, yes, I am looking. But, why am I looking? Our master has no need of a sword. He is the kindest samurai warrior in all of Japan. He grows flower and composes verse. He is truly a gentle soul.
ICHI: Yes, He is all of that, but still he is a samurai. A warrior pledged to fight evil.
TARO: You are right, Ichi... His life is dedicated to good. Now, where is that sword?
ICHI: You must find it soon.
TARO: I have looked everywhere. It is nowhere.
ICHI: Nowhere? Impossible. I saw our master put it down by the window but last night. Look there, by the window.
TARO: It is not here. The only thing that is here is this note addressed to our master.

ICHI: A note for our master? My mind whirls at the thought of what it might contain ... shall we open it?

TARO: No, we must not. It is for our master's eyes only. Perhaps if he is benevolent this day he will tell us what the note contains.

ICHI: I cannot hold this in my hand not knowing what it contains ... I will open it.

TARO: What will you tell our master?

ICHI: I will ... I will tell him that ... that a mouse chewed it open and we discovered it in that condition.

TARO: But, it will not look like a mouse chewed it open.

ICHI: In that case you will chew it ... making careful chews such as only a mouse might make.

TARO: Must I, Ichi ... ?

ICHI: You must.

TARO: I feel that this is wrong .... *(HE is preparing to chew when he sees SUBI coming.)* Oh, he is coming, Ichi, our master is coming.

SUBI: Greetings, my friends and loyal servants.

TARO and ICHI: Good evening, Master.

SUBI: Have you found my sword?

TARO: No, Master, it is nowhere to be found.

SUBI: Nowhere? But I remember placing it there by that window but last evening.

ICHI: The only thing we found, master, was this note.

SUBI: A note? *(HE reads.)* "You have lost your sword, Samurai, and a lost sword means humiliation and no more samurai." What does this mean?

ICHI: I think, Master, that it is saying that someone has stolen your sword.

SUBI: Why should anyone steal my sword? I never use it anyway ... if they had asked for it I would have given it to them.

TARO: But, a stolen sword is a disgrace to a samurai and you must get it back at all costs or suffer humiliation. You would never be able to be seen in public again.

SUBI: You are right, Taro. This is serious.

ICHI: You must go on a quest, Master.

TARO: A quest for your sword.

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