

Recitation B

The Story of Hoichi the Earless

Long ago, in the quiet town of Akamaga, there lived a blind musician named Hoichi. He was famous for his skill with the biwa, a traditional Japanese lute. His fingers moved gracefully across the strings, and his voice carried the sorrow of ancient battles. People said his music was so powerful that even spirits would stop to listen.

One hot summer night, as cicadas sang in the darkness, Hoichi sat alone in the temple garden. The air was heavy and still, and the moon cast pale shadows across the ground. Suddenly, he heard footsteps. A deep voice called, “Hoichi, my lord wishes to hear your song.” Surprised but respectful, Hoichi followed the stranger. He walked along cool stone paths and smelled the sweet scent of incense. Soon, he stood before a silent audience. Without hesitation, Hoichi began to play. His music told the story of brave warriors and their tragic fall. Every note was filled with emotion, and when he finished, the voice whispered, “Return tomorrow.”

The temple priest noticed something strange. “Hoichi, where have you been?” he asked. “To a great house,” Hoichi replied. “I played for noble lords.” The priest turned pale. “Those lords died long ago! You have been playing for ghosts!” Fear gripped Hoichi’s heart as the priest hurried to protect him. He wrote sacred words all over Hoichi’s body, hoping to hide him from the spirits. But in his hurry, he forgot one place—Hoichi’s ears.

That night, the spirits came again. They searched for Hoichi but saw only glowing letters. Angry, they tore off his ears and disappeared into the night.

From that day, people called him “Miminashi Hoichi”—Hoichi the Earless. His story has been told for generations, a tale of loyalty, courage, and the mysterious price of meeting the dead.

(298words)