

J. F. Chen

THE DRAGON

(2010)

a children's opera

based on the short story by Ryunosuke Akutagawa

libretto

THE DRAGON

TEXT AND MUSIC BY JUSTINE F. CHEN

Based on Ryunosuke Akutagawa's short story *The Dragon* - itself, an adaptation of a 12th century Japanese tale.

CAST:

NARRATOR/FEMALE CHORUS 2/PRIESTESS AUNT - Mezzo-Soprano

HANAZO - Bass/Baritone

OLD WOMAN/FEMALE CHORUS - Soprano

BROTHER EMON/MALE CHORUS - Tenor

SYNOPSIS:

In Nara of the early 10th or 11th century, a disgruntled monk sets up a sign predicting a March 3rd ascent of a dragon from a nearby pond as a prank to fool his fellow monks and townspeople who have shown him disrespect. The rumor takes hold of the town and neighboring districts, and anticipation builds. As thousands gather around the pond to witness this miraculous event, the monk himself is drawn to the glitter of the prophecy. Suddenly, the sky darkens, storm clouds gather, and a dragon appears rushing out of the water to the heavens. Or did it?

Scene 1: His Name

Scene 2: His Prank, and the First Encounter

Scene 3: The Second Encounter – Priest Emon

Scene 4: Subsequent Repercussions

Scene 5: The Third Day of the Third Month

DURATION: ca. 50 min.

AUDIENCE: Kindergarten – Fifth Grade (5-10 year olds)

Commissioned by North Carolina Opera through a grant from the Woman's Club of Raleigh.

Notes on Instrumentation:

The original concept for orchestration for a traveling education show was for piano, but as I have developed the idea further, I intend to have an onstage band of one maybe two percussionists with a medley of unpitched skins, metals, and woods, and a set of three or four flutists of varying registers.

Many times, the word “MUSICIANS” comes up in the libretto, the onstage musicians are those speakers, and when practical, children can also join in on those chanting segments.

Production Notes:

For the production, Jennifer Seiger, the education outreach director from NCO, mentioned the commission of a dragon puppet from a North Carolina puppet-making company called Paperhand Puppet Intervention (3/21/10). We shared ideas as far as the appearance of the Dragon and the storm scene. She suggested something along the lines of the heron on the website, something kite-like. I like the idea of the kite-like, more symbolic vs. more representational papier maché dragon made for Carolina Ballet; however, since the idea of the story is that we aren't sure if there Dragon actually appeared, I think it would be better to create more like a series of flags which will represent the rain and lightning with gestures which in one moment (slowed down to a virtual freeze-frame) catches the eye and looks like a dragon.

Program Notes:

When I was in Hiroshima attending the Animation Festival in 2000, I spent a fair amount of time with two Estonian animators— there were only a handful around our age. One morning, while we were eating our breakfast at the hotel restaurant, we were looking out at the river, and tried to determine which way it was flowing. I said it was flowing left, Pritt said it was flowing right, and Kaspar said it was flowing left. Pritt suggested we go out and throw our bread into the river to find the answer.

We went outside, and upon closer viewing, the river seemed to be flowing right. Pritt asked us to predict what the bread would do when it hit the water. Pritt said it would flow right, Kaspar said it would flow left, and I said it would stay in the same place. So,

Pritt threw his bread in, and it flowed right. Kaspar threw his bread in, and it flowed right, and I threw my bread in, and it sank.

One of the main concepts of this opera is the elemental creation of a story. When I first considered setting this story, my initial concept was to use black-and-white animation as the scenery of the town- I pictured Hanazo wandering around the stage and the animated scenery would swing around behind him to reveal vistas of the town about him.

Some of the main influences for the text and style of this libretto and opera include Arlene Mosel's classic children's story *Tikki Tikki Tembo*, Rajika Puri's Bharatanatyam-Odissi Indian dance hybrid story of Shiva and Ganga *Tapasya*, Akira Kurosawa's *Hidden Fortress*, and the Coen Brothers' satire *Intolerable Cruelty*. In terms of finding a balance between material, intent, stylization, and execution, my greatest influence for this opera was perhaps Brad Bird's *The Incredibles*. Many thanks to Nonoko Okada for walking me through the Japanese text; and much gratitude to Tom Diamond, Jim Glossman, and Yuval Sharon for assessing earlier drafts.

Notes on the Characters

NARRATOR- An authority figure on this story and the characters in it - a virtual ambassador from the town of Nara.

HANAZO, the Monk- distrustful, mischievous, sneaky, spiteful, clownish, and loveable at the same time.

OLD WOMAN – Keeps to herself, walks at a steady, imperially slow pace; surprisingly nervous for someone who moves so slowly.

EMON – Hanazo's fellow monk/priest/brother: preposterously proud and eminently condescending.

FEMALE CHORUS– An abstracted townswoman/spokesperson representing the town.

MALE CHORUS – An abstracted townsman/spokesperson representing the town.

AUNT – Hanazo's sweet priestess aunt: a sweet, willful, optimistic and guileless individual- one who believes everything wonderful and spiritual about the universe- perhaps a slight parody of the "Climb Every Mountain" nun from *The Sound of Music*.

Notes on Staging:

As this work is indebted to and inspired by practices of Noh theater, Peking opera, and Indian dance, the instrumentalists/MUSICIANS must always be visible and seated on the same stage/floor as the singers.

Pronunciation of Selected Words [IPA]

Nara: 'naɾa [the “r” is a flip, similar to the “dd” in “buddy”]

Kurodo Tokugo E'in: kuɾodo 'toku go e'in

Hanano Kurodo Tokugo E'in: 'hanɑ no kuɾodo 'toku go e'in

O-Hanano Kurodo Tokugo E'in: o'hanɑ no kuɾodo 'toku go e'in

Hanazo: 'hanɑzo

Kofuku: 'kofuku

Sarusawa: 'saɾusawa

Dara-deem: daɾa'dim

Dara-dum: daɾa'dɯm

Emon: 'ei mɔɯn

Shinsen-en: 'ʃinsɛnɛn

Kyoto: 'kjoto

Shinto: 'ʃinto

Settsu: 'setsu

THE DRAGON

adaptation and text by justine f. chen

SCENE I: HIS NAME

STAGE IS BLACK. NARRATOR remains unseen until HANAZO is revealed, and only then, the light on the NARRATOR should come up slowly.

NARRATOR: There was once a Monk -

LIGHTS UP on the stage show HANAZO striking a very graceful, sober, and devout pose, his face turned away... in modesty?

- this religious man of the Buddhist order, who could also be called a priest- lived in Japan's most beautiful city, Nara, during the tenth century. Or eleventh... Twelfth? Early twelfth?

The MONK, losing his poise, shifts his posture to exhibit impatience.

In any event, this Monk was... well, his *name* was Kurodo Tokugo. Koo-ROH-doh TOH-koo-goh, *E'in*. Kurodo Tokugo *E'in*, as his name so eminently implies, was an Extremely Important Official for the Imperial Archives, as pertaining to Religious Austerities.

Well, one might say, *he* thought he was extremely important as an Official for the Imperial Archives as pertaining to Religious Austerities...

One might also say that he was confused and yes, even annoyed that people did not take him more seriously, especially given his Very Important Title. Now, *he* did not understand why he was not treated with more respect, but of course there were reasons why this was the case:

It just so happens that this Monk (or Priest), Kurodo Tokugo *E'in*, had a very large nose. No- it was not exactly large... it was quite long, and at the end of this quite-long nose was a bright, red, round tip. In fact, most people did not call him by his very important title: "Kurodo Tokugo *E'in*," most referred to him as "Hanano Kurodo Tokugo" (Hanano means "Nose.") Sometimes they even called him: "O-hanano Kurodo Tokugo *E'in*," all of

libretto/*The Dragon*
J. F. Chen

which can be translated roughly as “Official Nose for the Imperial Archives, as pertaining to Religious...” et cetera.

This nickname of course was too long and rather tiresome to say, so eventually he was simply called “Hanazo” – which might be translated as, “Nose-licious”.

SCENE 2: HIS PRANK AND THE FIRST ENCOUNTER

NARRATOR (*cont'd*): One clear night, Hanazo took a walk on the grounds surrounding Kofuku Temple. Creeping alongside the Sarusawa Pond, he placed a notice on the bank in front of the Weeping Willow. On this sign, bold characters proclaimed: “On the Third Day of the Third Month, a Dragon Shall Ascend from the Sarusawa Pond.”

In fact, Hanazo did *not* know if there really was a dragon in the Sarusawa Pond, and needless to say, the proclamation itself was a bald-faced lie. In fact, a prediction of “zero dragons ascending from the Sarusawa Pond on the Third Day of the Third Month” would have a far greater chance of coming true than what he wrote.

Now, why would anyone make such unnecessary mischief? Hanazo, who was unhappy with his fellow priests (and... citizens) of Nara for constantly making fun of his ridiculous nose, had played this little prank so that finally he could laugh at *them*.

Exit HANAZO. The next morning. Enter bamboo cane-wielding OLD WOMAN, making loud rapping noises on the ground as she approaches.

The first person to see Hanazo’s sign was an Old Woman who came to worship at Kofuku Temple every morning - Kofuku Temple was Hanazo’s home, and quite close to the Sarusawa Pond. As this was her daily routine, the mere

presence of the sign took her by surprise... but since this Old Woman could not read, she quickly dismissed the oddly-placed notice.

Enter HANAZO disguised to the audience (cloaked?) from the opposite direction of the OLD WOMAN. He practically pushes her back towards the sign and takes a good look at the notice.

OLD WOMAN: Esteemed Priest, my eyesight is quite poor, would you be so kind as to read this sign for me?

HANAZO (*in disguise*): With humble honor. What have we here? “On the Third Day of the Third Month, a Dragon shall ascend from the Sarusawa Pond.”

OLD WOMAN and HANAZO simultaneously register great surprise.

OLD WOMAN: Esteemed Priest, is it possible... a Dragon...?

HANAZO (*in disguise*): It is said: “A Chinese scholar once developed a lump above his right eye. This tiny lump - which itched terribly - grew each day. It itched and grew, and itched and grew, until one day: the sky darkened, torrential rain poured down, and from that lump, a dragon burst forth and flew straight to the heavens.” Now, if a dragon can live in a lump, surely tens of dragons could dwell in our majestic Sarusawa.

NARRATOR: The Old Woman- who believed that priests could only speak truthfully - did not know what to think.

MUSICIANS: (*whispering*) Dara-deem...

OLD WOMAN: Oh my. The color of the water does look suspicious.

MUSICIANS: (*whispering*) Dara-dum.

The OLD WOMAN hurries OFF STAGE.

NARRATOR: The priest was left alone with the sign...

MUSICIANS: Dara-deem, dara-dum.

NARRATOR: ... and were it not for the passers by...

MUSICIANS: Dara-deem, dara-dum.

libretto/*The Dragon*
J. F. Chen

NARRATOR: ... he would have certainly split his sides laughing, for as you may have already guessed, the priest speaking to that Old Woman was none other than the author of the notice:

NARRATOR & MUSICIANS: Kurodo Tokugo E'in.

SCENE 3: THE SECOND ENCOUNTER – PRIEST EMON

While the NARRATOR speaks, various people pass by the notice. HANAZO exhibits to the different passers-by a variety of reactions to the sign, ranging from mild to super-intense confusion, shock, and joy.

NARRATOR (*cont'd*): After that first encounter, Hanazo remained near the sign, making sure all who passed saw his attention to the notice. After a fair amount of time- and an overly dramatic sniff- he left his post and returned to Kofuku Temple.

Approaching the southern gate of the Temple, HANAZO spots EMON. HANAZO turns to walk the other direction, but has already been seen by EMON. EMON's movement and presence is punctuated by a chorus of whispered chanting of his name.

MUSICIANS: (*whispered energetically, like a battle-cry*) Emon, Emon.

NARRATOR: Meet Brother Emon, known for his giant head and great big caterpillar-like brows, which exaggerate the unpleasant look of his face.

EMON: What is this strange, unnatural light? It is the blinding reflection of the morning sun from the Hideous Nose of Nara! Have mercy on us, Hideous Nose of Nara, please leave us some ...(*he gasps*) air (*he pretends to choke, and collapses. Beat. Gets up laughing.*) Brother Monk, tell me what miracle pulled you from your bed so early this fine day? Perhaps your preposterous nose can sense if the weather too will bring something extraordinary...

EMON starts to walk away.

HANAZO: Brother Monk,

MUSICIANS: Dara-deem.

NARRATOR: Hanazo's nose tingled with excitement...

HANAZO: It is said: "A Dragon Shall Ascend from the Sarusawa Pond."

MUSICIANS: Dara-deem.

EMON: (*Starts. Looks suspiciously at HANAZO (beat); looks dubiously at HANAZO (beat);*

then... chuckling and shaking his enormous head) Brother Monk, what a delirious dream you have had! No doubt the morning air has gone to your head. (*beat. Then with great seriousness and importance*) It is said: "To Dream of a Flying Dragon is Truly Auspicious."

EMON starts walking away, passing in front of HANAZO with great pomp and grandiosity.

HANAZO: (*aggressively beatific*) It is said: "Enlightenment Does Not Come To All, No Matter How Giant Ones Head."

EMON stops dead in his tracks, swivels with great fury, and marches up to HANAZO's face.

EMON: (*growling contemptuously*) Brother Monk! This alleged "Dragon"... have you proof?

NARRATOR: ...and with a grace rivaling the compassionate Buddha, Hanazo pointed to the Sarusawa Pond.

HANAZO: If you don't believe me, you might rest those caterpillars on the notice by the Weeping Willow.

NARRATOR: Emon, normally stubborn and full of keen reasoning, seemed to lose all sense.

EMON: (*suddenly captivated and almost demure*) Is it written?

Caterpillars in repose, EMON drifts away in a cloud of ecstasy.

libretto/*The Dragon*
J. F. Chen

NARRATOR: Hanazo was pleased. It was as if his entire nose was filled with bubbles of happiness; and as he made his way up the stone steps, he could no longer contain his overwhelming joy.

HANAZO: *(dancing with joy)* On the Third Day, Dara-deem, Dara-dum!

Of the Third Month, Dara-deem, Dara-dum!

A Dragon Shall Ascend, Dara-deem, Dara-dum!

From the Sarusawa Pond, Dara-deem, Dara-dum!

Those foolish enough to believe will emerge, Dara-deem, Dara-dum.

SCENE 4: SUBSEQUENT REPERCUSSIONS

NARRATOR: Now, that notice proclaiming:

NARRATOR & EMON: “On the Third Day of the Third Month, a Dragon Shall Ascend from the Sarusawa Pond.”

NARRATOR: ... had a tremendous affect on the people of Nara. Within just a few days, the Dragon of Sarusawa Pond had become the talk of the town. Of course there were those who did not believe immediately:

FEMALE CHORUS: That notice could be some kind of hoax!

NARRATOR: But around the same time, in nearby Kyoto, there were rumors that a dragon had “ascended to the heavens” from Kyoto’s beautiful Shinsen-en Garden; hearing of this made those who had originally doubted the notice consider the prediction of the Sarusawa Dragon more seriously.

NARRATOR joins FEMALE CHORUS on stage to form a kind of fresco, NARRATOR as Priestess, FEMALE CHORUS as Daughter. During the NARRATOR’s description, the performers enact daughter dozing, the Dragon’s arrival, and the daughter’s waking and telling the story to her mother. MALE CHORUS speaks as the Dragon.

NARRATOR: Not ten days later, the nine-year old daughter of a Shinto priestess
was half-asleep with her head in her mother's lap, when a Black Dragon
fell like a cloud from Heaven and spoke:

MALE CHORUS (*as the Dragon*) & FEMALE CHORUS (*as the daughter relating the
story to her mother*): 'It is said: "On the Third Day of the Third Month, I
shall ascend to the heavens;" but fear not, for no harm shall come to your
village.'

*NARRATOR, FEMALE CHORUS, and MALE CHORUS break out of fresco formation
and CHORUSES become "townspeople" gossiping in their own version of "telephone".
NARRATOR joins as townspeople after "exaggerated".*

NARRATOR: The dream was tied to the rumor of the dragon from the Sarusawa
Pond, and caused a great sensation; of course, this story got exaggerated:

FEMALE CHORUS: A Child possessed of a Dragon wrote an Enlightened Poem!

NARRATOR/FEMALE CHORUS 2: A Shinto priest offered a Dragon a Poem for a
Sacred Child!

MALE CHORUS: A Dragon appeared to a young Shinto priest and offered Divine
Enlightenment!

NARRATOR: And there was the old fisherman...

MALE CHORUS: Have you heard about the fisherman?

NARRATOR/FEMALE CHORUS 2: Early one morning, through the thick haze...

MALE CHORUS: ... An old fisherman saw a dragon poke its head out from the
Sarusawa, under the Weeping Willow where the sign stands!

FEMALE CHORUS: The Dragon of the Sarusawa Pond!

HANAZO, ALL + MUSICIANS: (*whispering*) On the Third Day...

MALE CHORUS: Trembling with fear, he approached the Sarusawa Pond...

HANAZO, ALL + MUSICIANS: (*whispering*) Of the Third Month...

libretto/*The Dragon*

J. F. Chen

MALE CHORUS: Holding on to the Weeping Willow, looking deep into the water,
he saw the dark monster coiled at the bottom of the dimly lit pond...

HANAZO, ALL + MUSICIANS: (*whispering*) A Dragon!

MALE CHORUS: Perhaps he was frightened off by footsteps, but for whatever
reason, the Dragon swam off in a shimmer of light.

FEMALE CHORUS: It could have been an otter.

MALE CHORUS: Preposterous! No mere *otter* could live where the Dragon King
presides! There must have been a disturbance in another part of the pond
that required the Dragon King's attention.

NARRATOR: Of course, Hanazo was pleased to hear all the different Dragon
stories that multiplied with the course of time, and every time he heard
anything related to the notice, his nose practically jangled with the special
pleasure of knowing that he alone knew the truth.

*During this part, the NARRATOR must be on stage as the AUNT and the NARRATOR;
HANAZO immediately interacts with the presence of the NARRATOR as the AUNT.
The NARRATOR, however, continues to narrate to the audience until m. 82 (after "a
thousand other methods"), when she officially 'becomes' the AUNT for the audience.*

NARRATOR: The Third Day of the Third Month drew near. A few days before the
date- and to his great surprise- Hanazo ran into his aunt, a priestess from
the distant province of Settsu, who came all the long way to Nara,
determined to see the Sarusawa Dragon.

Hanazo became terribly embarrassed, and tried his best to persuade her to go back:
he tried Fear...

HANAZO attempts to frighten his AUNT; she shakes her head.

NARRATOR: Bribery...

HANAZO attempts to coax his AUNT with a pineapple; she shakes her head.

NARRATOR: And a thousand other methods...

HANAZO attempts to tickle his AUNT; to give her a duck, pretends to faint, juggle, threatens her with a sword, threatens to kill himself, threatens to play the flute for her, makes a crazy face, pushes her with all his might; but she simply stands still.

AUNT: As you know, dear nephew, I am very old, but if I am blessed enough to catch a glimpse of the Dragon Diety, I shall be content to pass on.

Why so glum? Dara-deem, Dara-dum?

HANAZO: Daradum...

AUNT (*happily*) // HANAZO (*half-heartedly*): On the Third Day // Dara-deem, Dara-dum,

Of the Third Month // Dara-deem, Dara-dum,

A Dragon Shall Ascend // Dara-deem, Dara-dum,

From the Sarusawa Pond // Dara-deem, Dara-dum!

AUNT: Come now, we'll have a splendid time together in Nara...

HANAZO: (*unenthusiastically*) Dara-deem, Dara-dum.

AUNT: ... And of course, you will be my escort to the Dragon Diety's Ascent.

HANAZO: Dara-deem, Dara-dum.

AUNT separates from the scene and comes to the fore as NARRATOR.

NARRATOR: Hanazo began to realize a few things: since news of the Sarusawa

Dragon had reached his aunt, the rumor had spread to outer and possibly even distant provinces. His prank originally intended solely for the people of Nara, had unexpectedly fooled tens of thousands of people. When Hanazo pondered this, he felt more alarmed than pleased.

HANAZO: (*dancing with mixed emotions, with increasing distraction*) On the Third Day,

Dara-deem, Dara-dum,

...Third Month... Dara-dum,

...Dragon... Dara-deem, Dara-dum,

Sarusawa Pond, Dara-deem...

libretto/*The Dragon*
J. F. Chen

MUSICIANS: Daradum.

INTERLUDE

During this musical INTERLUDE, there is a figurative rising and falling of the sun, and the stage gradually becomes filled with items (ie. people, colorful carts, etc.) representing a full and bustling crowd for the final scene.

SCENE 5: THE THIRD DAY OF THE THIRD MONTH

It's the big day. We see HANAZO accompanying his AUNT, and settling at the top of the stone steps, near the grand southern gate of the Kofuku Temple.

AUNT: At last, the Third Day of the Third Month! What a wonderfully clear and sunny day. Not even a breath of wind lingers in the air.

HANAZO: *(totally depressed)* Not even a breath... And what a tremendous crowd of people! A truly cloudless day.

HANAZO looks at his AUNT with poorly-feigned excitement.

AUNT: What a magnificent view we have of the Dragon God's Pond. Look at all the beautiful headwear and ceremonial robes.

HANAZO smiles feebly and looks back into the crowd, gets a face full of ceremonial head-gear; HANAZO spots EMON and is suddenly delighted again.

HANAZO: Brother Monk, have you come to witness the Dragon's Ascent?

EMON: *(Will Shatner meets Noh)* On the Third Day, Dara-deem, Dara-dum,

Of the Third Month Dara-deem, Dara-dum,

A Dragon Shall Ascend, Dara-deem, Dara-dum,

From the Sarusawa Pond, Dara-deem, Dara-dum.

FEMALE CHORUS, EMON, AUNT & MUSICIANS: *(chanting)* On the Third Day, Of the Third Month, A Dragon Shall Ascend, From the Sarusawa Pond.

EMON: This Dragon is certainly taking his time.

HANAZO: *(to himself)* After all this time, how could all these people still be waiting?

There are no signs of the dragon in the preposterously smooth surface of

the water... (*staring unbelieving at the water*) Is it possible? Is the pond
getting smaller? Smaller and smaller... Despite the passing hours, the eager
spectators waited with great patience...

ALL: Dara-deem...

HANAZO: ...breathless with anticipation...

ALL: Dara-deem...

HANAZO: ... And though it seemed impossible, the massive crowd grew.

ALL: Dara-deem, Dara-dum,	NARRATOR: As Hanazo
On the Third Day, Dara-,	watched the crowd thicken,
Of the Third Month, Dara-dum,	he grew more and more
A Dragon Shall Ascend, Dara-deem,	miserable...

NARRATOR: - And then something strange happened:

ALL: Dara-deem...

NARRATOR: Hanazo himself began to believe...

HANAZO: - to Truly Believe...

ALL (but HANAZO): Dara-deem

HANAZO: ...in his heart ...

ALL (but HANAZO): Dara-deem

HANAZO: There *could* be a dragon...

ALL (but HANAZO): On the Third Day...

HANAZO: It could happen...

ALL (but HANAZO): Of the Third Month, A Dragon Shall Ascend...

HANAZO: A Dragon Shall Ascend...

FEMALE CHORUS, AUNT, MALE CHORUS: Dragon, Dragon, Dragon...

HANAZO: A Dragon Shall Ascend...

FEMALE CHORUS, NARRATOR, MALE CHORUS: Ascend, Ascend, Ascend...

libretto/*The Dragon*
J. F. Chen

HANAZO: (*whispered fiercely*) From the Sarusawa Pond!

ALL (*chanting*): Daradeem, Dara-dum...

FEMALE CHORUS/OLD WOMAN (*in a Narrator-esque 3rd person*): And though he
knew quite well that he had written the sign himself,

HANAZO (*in a Narrator-esque 3rd person*): Hanazo too found himself staring at the
surface of the Pond...

AUNT (*in a Narrator-esque 3rd person*): ...with the same intent and anticipation of his
Aunt and those all around him.

ALL: On the Third Day, Daradeem

Of the Third Month, Daradum

A Dragon Shall Ascend Daradeem

From the Sarusawa Pond, Daradeem, Daradum.

MALE CHORUS (*in a Narrator-esque 3rd person*): Nearly half a day had passed, when a
swirl of clouds appeared.

*MUSICIANS and OPTIONAL CHILDREN provide SFX/chanting that grows
proportionally in intensity and volume during the description of the storm.*

FEMALE CHORUS (*in a Narrator-esque 3rd person*): The sky, which had been clear
suddenly darkened...

MALE CHORUS (*in a Narrator-esque 3rd person*): ...a gust of wind swept over the
Pond, shattering the glassy surface.

NARRATOR: Torrential rain poured down and deafening claps of thunder shot
through the air, as lightning flashed brilliantly above.

ALL (*in a Narrator-esque 3rd person*): Then it seemed that supernatural hands forced
apart a cluster of clouds, and with the strength of the void, a stream of
water rushed from the Pond to the Heavens.

HANAZO (*in a Narrator-esque 3rd person*): In that instant, Hanazo caught sight of a Black Dragon more than one-hundred feet long, shooting straight into the sky, golden talons flashing...

NARRATOR: But all of this happened in one brief moment- a 'twinkling', if you will. Eventually the storm ended, and the blue sky reappeared above the Sarusawa Pond. Hanazo looked around, as if he had forgotten his preposterous nose. Did he see what he thought he saw? As the author of the sign he knew the Dragon's Ascent was impossible- however, he *did* see it... and, the more he wondered, the more mysterious it became. When he roused his Aunt, who was nearly unconscious, he was unable to conceal his bewilderment.

HANAZO: Did *you* see the dragon?

AUNT: (*takes a moment to think*) Surely I did: all black, Golden Talons flashing mightily?

HANAZO: (*echoing*) Mightily...

NARRATOR: So, it seems that it was not only the eyes of Hanazo Kurodo Tokugo that witnessed the dragon. It is said that men and women of all ages who had been at the Sarusawa Pond on the Third Day of the Third Month saw the Black Dragon ascending to Heaven in a dark cloud.

Eventually, Hanazo confessed that it was he who had written the notice; but no one believed him- none of his fellow priests, not even Emon believed his confession. Did his notice predict the future? Did it create the future? Or was it incorrect? Even Hanazo, our very own O-Hanano Kurodo Tokugo E'in himself might not be able to answer the question.