

# MOMO NO KAWA: PEACH RIVER

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A one-act drama by  
Shoshannah Boray

Adapted from the Japanese folktale *Momotaro*

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## CAST OF CHARACTERS

MOMOKO, Peach Girl, one of the twins.

MOMOTARO, Peach Boy, one of the twins.

VILLAGERS, minimum of 4. The Villagers' lines can be combined for a smaller cast or divided to accommodate a larger cast; for instance, add a second cook, or add a librarian or a baker; villagers can be added with lines or without.

GARDENER, the twins' mother.

WOODCUTTER, the twins' father.

COOK

BUILDER

SCRIBE

FISHERMAN

POTTER

ONI, Ogres of Japanese folklore, minimum of 3. Villagers can double as Oni for a smaller cast; Oni can be added for a larger cast.

QUEEN OF THE ONI, could also be King of the Oni.

INU, the Dog Family, 1-8 actors.\*

SARU, the Monkey Family, 2-8 actors.\*

SARU #2

KIJII, the Bird Family, 1-8 actors.\*

\*See Casting Notes for more details.

## NOTES

*Momotaro* is a famous Japanese folktale, told to children to teach them the values of honor, courage and strength.

*Momo No Kawa: Peach River* strives to reflect the heroism of the original tale, but to broaden that image of heroism to include all genders, peaceful cooperation among different peoples (or species, in this case!) and stewardship of the environment.

## PRODUCTION NOTES

ODORI, DRUMMING AND ONI MASKS: *Momo No Kawa* lends itself to the incorporation of many traditional Japanese arts, especially Odori (folk dance), Japanese music and Taiko drumming. The play opens and closes with a kind of village Matsuri, or festival, and specifically a communal dance, such as the Bon odori you would see at an O-bon celebration. The O-bon celebration includes the gathering of the local community for a joyful dance that varies from village to village, and is inspired by local village flavor, geography, the village's trade and the harvest. You can adapt some simple steps to reflect rural agrarian life, such as fishing or farming. This traditional dance, in all its variations, is by nature communal, inclusive of local and foreigner, young and old, and accessible to all. As such it lends itself well to your adapting simple movements for a modified/tradition-inspired dance in your performances. Check out YouTube for videos of Bon odori all over Japan, and at Japanese Matsuri all over the world.

For the Oni scenes, I found Taiko drumming was the perfect rhythmic sound for the building intensity of the marauding Oni. You can find a multitude of soundtracks of Taiko, from the very traditional to the very contemporary. I recommend using these tracks for sound and letting your young actors add in their own drumming / choreographed fighting / dancing / marauding on top of it. I have used a Taiko drum (though the students didn't master the form, they were able to use it for the

show) and I have used cardboard drums that I made with students (again, for theatrics!). The Oni, the ogres of Japanese folklore, could have traditional masks, which would be a great addition to any production.

CASTING NOTES: Roles are gender-neutral, with the exception that the twins should be a girl and a boy.

Cast size is easily expanded by adding characters to any of the five family groups: the Villagers, the Oni, the Inu, the Saru, or the Kijii. You can do this in three ways. First, simply add non-speaking roles to any of the groups. These roles could be additional dogs for the Inu family, non-speaking Bakers or other villagers, marauding Oni, etc. A second option is to divide lines that you see in the script for one Inu, for instance, into lines for several Inu. Finally, there are several parts that adapt themselves well to the director or the actors adding their own lines: Villagers can chime in, Oni may add their own rants, and Inu, Saru or Kijii may add comments to their scenes. Please do. The intention is that all actors who want speaking lines can have them, and those who don't want them can also have active, fun roles on stage.

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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#### DEDICATION

Dedicated to my daughters, Zoe and Emi Boray.

## PART 1: A SMALL JAPANESE FISHING VILLAGE

*(Lights rise on a busy village. The Villagers – COOK, BUILDER, SCRIBE, FISHERMAN, POTTER, GARDENER and WOODCUTTER – are going about their business, baking, fishing, building, etc. They interact with one another, buying fish or vegetables, getting a book from the library, quietly chatting and working together.)*

**COOK:** Once upon a time there was a small village in Japan. It was like other small villages – everyone knew one another and everyone helped one another.

**BUILDER:** There was a gardener who everyone loved; there was the fisherman who caught the fish that everyone ate; there was the potter who made rice bowls and tea pots; the scribe who took care of the village's books and treasures, and the chefs who made the most delicious mochi, and noodles, and dumplings.

**COOK:** There were builders who made homes, and furniture, and the woodcutters who brought them their raw material.

**BUILDER:** The villagers would gather for festivals, they would gather to celebrate births and weddings and console one another when something bad happened.

**COOK:** And, unfortunately, bad things did happen – a lot! Because across the water from this village – was a small island. Oni Island. And who do you think lived there? The Oni!!!

*(As the Villagers go about their business, the ONI sail up Peach River, straining to contain themselves. Just as they reach the village, the Scribe sees them.)*

**SCRIBE:** Oni! Oni! Quick – everyone hide!!!!

*(The Villagers hide and the Oni invade, beating their drums. They destroy the village, throw trash on the ground and in the river and*

*forest, knock down trees, and steal treasures. Taiko drumming as they wreak havoc; crescendos, they finish – )*

**QUEEN OF THE ONI:** AAAAArrrrgghhh! Grab the treasures! Get me a cake!

**ONI:** Aaarrghhh!!!!

*(QUEEN OF THE ONI leads them back home. The Fisherman comes out first and sees that it is clear.)*

**FISHERMAN:** They're gone! They're gone! It's safe to come out!

*(They check with one another to make sure everyone is okay. They begin to rebuild and put back together their town.)*

**SCRIBE:** They took my favorite book!

**FISHERMAN:** They threw trash all over our village!

**POTTER:** They broke all our pots.

**SCRIBE:** Come on, everyone. Let's rebuild our town.

**WOODCUTTER:** I will help you rebuild your home.

**GARDENER:** Let's clean up the garden.

**POTTER:** Anyone who needs a teapot—please. I will make more.

## PART 2: THE GIANT PEACH

**BUILDER:** Soon things settled back to normal at the village. Then, one day, the Gardener was down at the river tending her garden, when the most extraordinary thing happened!

*(The Gardener works her garden and then, from far away, sees a Giant Peach floating down the river.)*

**GARDENER:** What—what is that?

*(She drags it from the river and examines it.)*



Why—it's a giant peach! And it smells so good!!! I'm going to take it home right away and share it with my husband!

*(She takes it home and finds her husband the Woodcutter, working out back.)*

**WOODCUTTER:** Extraordinary!!!

**GARDENER:** I found it in the river! Just floating down the Kawa!

**WOODCUTTER:** It smells—like the most beautiful thing I ever smelled in my life!

**GARDENER:** It smells like—all my dreams coming true!

**WOODCUTTER:** Let's cut it open! I can't wait to taste it!

**GARDENER:** I know!!!

*(The Woodcutter grabs his sword and begins to split it open. But as he strikes the Peach, two young children—soon to be called MOMOTARO and MOMOKO—burst out!)*

**MOMOTARO:** Hold your sword!!!

**MOMOKO:** Don't cut! Gardener, Woodcutter, do not be afraid. We have been sent from the God of Heaven!

**MOMOTARO:** The God of Heaven saw how lonely you were without children. And how loving and generous you are, and so we were sent to be your son and daughter.

**WOODCUTTER:** The smell—the beauty—I should have known this peach was magical. I have never seen a more beautiful sight.

**GARDENER:** We are blessed.

**WOODCUTTER:** Daughter—you are as beautiful and powerful as a peach blossom that grows into a mighty tree. We will call you Momoko. Peach Girl.

**MOMOKO:** Okasan.

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*(Bows.)*

**GARDENER:** Son—you are as strong and as clever as the delicate peach that hides an immovable stone. We will call you Momotaro. Peach Boy.

**MOMOTARO:** Ootosan.

*(Bows.)*

**WOODCUTTER:** We are honored to be your parents and to raise you.

**FISHERMAN:** Hey everyone!!! Gardener found a giant peach floating down Momo Kawa! And, and—Gardener and Woodcutter have been blessed with twins!!!!!! Come on, everyone, let's celebrate!

*(Music begins. Villagers with gifts gather at their home.)*

**COOK:** We have brought a cake, so that you will always have sweetness.

**SCRIBE:** I have brought books for the twins, so they will always love to learn.

**FISHERMAN:** I have brought this amazing fish—freshly caught—to make them strong and smart!

**POTTER:** We have made this teapot, to serve Ocha, to bring them long life and strength.

**BUILDER:** We will build an addition to your home, to always keep them safe!

**SCRIBE:** Welcome, Momotaro and Momoko!!!!

*(Festival music of the village begins, and the villagers join in a Bon odori style folk dance [See Production Notes]. As the music winds down and the dance finishes, the scene freezes, and the Cook and Builder come out of the circle.)*

**COOK:** Gardener and Woodcutter were great parents. They raised Momoko and Momotaro with love and affection, with discipline and guidance.

*(The Villagers dissipate. Momotaro and Momoko help their parents as they go – with gardening, woodcutting. They spar affectionately. They build something.)*

**BUILDER:** Momotaro and Momoko grew up to be strong, and clever, and caring people.

**COOK:** Fifteen years passed. The Oni came and went many times, bringing havoc and destruction. The Villagers rebuilt and carried on.

**BUILDER:** Momotaro and Momoko knew it was time.

*(Cook and Builder exit; Gardener and Woodcutter are nearby quietly working.)*

**MOMOKO:** *(To Momotaro:)* It's time.

**MOMOTARO:** Okasan. Otosan. We have come to a decision.

**MOMOKO:** You have raised us with love and affection.

**MOMOTARO:** You have taught us strength and kindness.

**MOMOKO:** And now we feel it is time for us to do something to help our village.

**MOMOTARO:** We are going to Oni Island. We are going to confront the Oni.

**MOMOKO:** We are going to stop the Oni.

**WOODCUTTER:** This is dangerous!

**GARDENER:** There are many, many Oni!

**WOODCUTTER:** They are powerful!

**GARDENER:** They are dangerous!!

*(Woodcutter and Gardener fall silent. The parents look at each other. They understand. Gardener goes to her kitchen. Woodcutter takes their hands and speaks gravely.)*

**WOODCUTTER:** I knew this day would come, and still it takes me by surprise. I am very proud of you. I have made this for you, to prepare you for your journey. I have made each of you a sword, to help you fight bravely for the good of our people. I am entrusting it to each of you. And most importantly, I have made you each a special shield, to protect yourselves and one another.

**GARDENER:** I have prepared for you these special kibidango. They are special dumplings, for they contain all a mother's love, and strength for your journey.

*(Momoko and Momotaro bow to their parents and gather their things. They set off on their journey.)*

### **PART 3: THE JOURNEY**

**MOMOKO:** Brother, how many Oni are there?

**MOMOTARO:** I do not know. Sister, how far is Oni Island?

**MOMOKO:** I do not know, only that we follow the river until we get to the sea, and then we set sail.

**MOMOTARO:** I am glad we are together.

**MOMOKO:** So am I.

*(INU [The Dog family] attacks.)*

**INU:** AAArrrrghhhh—

**MOMOTARO:** Stop! Stop!!!

**INU:** This is Inu Land!!! And you smell like something I want to eat!

**MOMOKO:** Inu! What you smell are Haha's kibidango.

**INU:** Give me! No one trespasses on Inu land!!! We have set up a defense against all Oni.

*(Momotaro pulls his sword, which stops Inu from advancing.)*

**MOMOTARO:** Inu – we are not Oni –

**INU:** All outsiders, threatening to destroy, to steal –

**MOMOKO:** We are not Oni, Inu, and we do not threaten you. We are only passing through.

**INU:** You need permission to walk through Inu land! And how do I know you are not like the Oni! How do I know – ?! You are not Inu, and I cannot trust you.

**MOMOKO:** The Oni have destroyed our home over and over. We would never wish the same on another.

**MOMOTARO:** We are going to fight the Oni.

**INU:** Fight the Oni!!! But the Oni – the Oni –

**MOMOKO:** The Oni are fierce, but they have stolen from us and destroyed our land –

**INU:** And mine!

**MOMOTARO:** Inu – sit down! We're not threatening you. We will share our dumplings with you, and ask you to join us on our Journey.

**INU:** But the Oni are fierce!

**MOMOKO:** The time has come and we must fight them!

**INU:** What's in it for the Inu family? Why should we do this?

**MOMOTARO:** We are stronger together. It will be a challenge, it will take courage – We know how loyal – and how fierce – the Inu are.

**INU:** Let me consult with my family.

**MOMOKO:** We will work together to make our homes better.  
And we will share our Kibidango.

*(Inu talks to the other dogs.)*

**INU:** You can count on us.

**MOMOTARO:** Please, have some of our mother's dumplings,  
and let's be on our way.

**MOMOKO:** It is an honor to work with you.

*(They share dumplings together and continue on their journey.  
After walking some way.)*

**INU:** How far is it to Oni Island?

**MOMOKO:** We don't know – we follow the river until –

*(The SARU [Monkey family] jump out and tease the Inu. Inu  
slips and falls on a banana skin. They chase each other until  
Momoko stops them.)*

**INU:** I'll get you!!!

**SARU #2:** Hahaha! Look! He *fell* for the banana peel!!!

**SARU #1:** Hahaha! Walk much, Inu?

*(They swing down and try to steal Momotaro's shield.)*

**SARU #2:** What are you? You're not an Oni and you're not an  
Inu, but you look funny and you smell like peaches!!!

**SARU #1:** I didn't know Inu liked peaches!

**MOMOKO:** Halt!!! Saru – Saru!!!! Hear us out!!!

**SARU #1:** We don't want to listen!!

**SARU #2:** We want to tease Inu!!!

**SARU #1:** Inu, can you swing from the trees like this?

**INU:** Saru, do you have teeth as sharp as these!

**SARU #2:** Inu, you can have this banana if you can jump as high as me!

*(Inu growls and Saru run – they chatter and laugh at him –)*

**MOMOKO:** In the name of the God of Heaven, STOP!!!!

*(Saru and Inu stop and quiet.)*

**SARU #1:** You are not welcome here.

**SARU #2:** And you smell like peach farts!

**MOMOTARO:** Saru – We have come here with Inu to find Oni Island and fight the Oni for good!

**SARU #1:** *(Laughing:)* You can't fight Oni!!! They are ogres!

**SARU #2:** They chop all the branches off our trees!

**SARU #2:** But we cover them in toilet paper and glue –

**SARU #1:** – and then we throw glitter all over them!

*(They throw glitter on Inu.)*

**MOMOKO:** Saru –!!! It is true the Oni are mighty. But together – if you join us – perhaps we can be as mighty!!

**MOMOTARO:** Join us, Saru. Join me and Momoko and the Inu family – and together we will fight the Oni instead of hiding from them!

**SARU #1:** How will you do this? The Oni have been wreaking havoc forever!

**SARU #2:** And when they sleep, we tie their shoelaces together!!

**SARU #1:** And steal one sock, one glove, and the last piece of their cake.

**SARU #2:** They hate that!!!

**SARU #1:** It drives them insane!!! Ha ha ha ha.

**SARU #2:** But they still come again, and when they're done, we have no trees to swing in.

**SARU #1:** And we're left with a collection of stray socks.

*(The Saru show their sock puppets.)*

**INU:** You should fight!!

**SARU #2:** At least we have sock puppets!!! What do you have?

**INU:** Pride!!

**SARU #1:** Well, we have puppet shows!!!! And the Oni haven't stopped bothering you—we can see the wreck they make in your home from here.

**INU:** Hmmph!!!

**MOMOKO:** Saru, Inu...join us. With your strength, Inu, and your creativity, Saru—

**MOMOTARO:** It's time to do something. To put aside your differences...

*(The Saru chatter together.)*

**SARU #2:** We might fight with you.

**MOMOKO:** You will make peace with Inu?

**SARU #1:** We might make peace to fight the Oni.

**MOMOKO:** You need to be serious. Can we count on you to be our allies?

**SARU #1:** Yes, Peach Girl. You can count on us.

*(Inu and Saru shake hands. With their sock puppets. Then for real.)*

**MOMOTARO:** Please share our Haha's kibidango and let us be on our way.

*(They continue along the river together eating the dumplings until they come to a grove of trees where the river meets the sea.)*

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**MOMOTARO:** Sister! There it is! Across the sea! Oni Island!!!

**INU:** I can hear them. I can smell them.

**MOMOTARO:** We need a boat. It is too far to swim.

**MOMOKO:** Let's cut down these trees and make a raft. Inu, use your teeth. Saru, pick the sturdiest trunks —

*(They begin to chop. Suddenly they hear an eerie scream that stops them cold. KIJII [The Bird family] swoop down and peck at them as they scream and hide.)*

**KIJII:** EEEEEeeee! EEEEEeeee!

**MOMOTARO:** Kijii!! Kijii!!! Stop, please, stop!!!!

**KIJII:** You are destroying our homes!!! We will not stop!!!

**MOMOTARO:** Kijii, please!! One moment to hear us out!

**MOMOKO:** Please, we come in peace!!

**KIJII:** Peace!!! Chopping down our trees is not peace!!!

**MOMOKO:** One word, Kijii, one word!

*(Kijii stops, and Inu and Saru calm down and hide, crouching close to the ground to protect themselves.)*

**MOMOTARO:** Kijii.

**MOMOKO:** We have come here to sail to Oni Island and fight the Oni.

**KIJII:** The Oni!!!! The Oni destroy our trees and our nests every year!! The trees do not grow back fast enough, and we are dying because we don't have enough room to live!!!

**SARU #2:** They cut all the branches off our trees and we have nowhere to swing!!!

**INU:** They pollute our river so we fall sick from drinking!!!

**KIJII:** We detest and fear the Oni!!!!

**MOMOTARO:** As do we.

**KIJII:** But you cut our trees down—just like the Oni!!!

**MOMOKO:** No! Kijii—we only cut enough to make a raft to sail to Oni Island and stop these monsters.

**KIJII:** They are still our sacred trees, our home. And you have no right.

**MOMOTARO:** You are right, Kijii. We are sorry.

**KIJII:** You cannot stop the Oni! They are fierce and angry and they only want to beat their drums and dance and destroy.

**MOMOTARO:** We will fight the Oni, Kijii, and we ask you to join us. Together, Saru and Inu, and my sister and I—we can challenge the Oni. With you as well—we can defeat them.

**MOMOKO:** Together, we can stop their destruction. Will you join us? Kijii?

**KIJII:** Saru and Inu have joined you? They are working together?

**INU:** We are working together.

**KIJII:** We have given up hope of stopping the Oni. Our home is disappearing.

**MOMOKO:** Please do not give up hope. Together...we can change things. We can heal. We can make it better.

**KIJII:** We have done calculations. It is... It has been...so hopeless. Let me think.

**INU:** Kijii, I know we can do it, if we push hard.

**SARU #1:** Hopeless is no fun.

**KIJII:** Strength alone will not defeat the Oni. We need to be cunning, we need to smart.

**MOMOKO:** And we need to work together.

**KIJII:** If we work together...with Inu's determination and force, Saru's creativity, and the intellect of the Kijii...and with your leadership and strength, Momotaro and Momoko...we might have a chance.

**MOMOTARO:** Let's make a plan.

**KIJII:** Well, we Kijii aren't strong enough to fight the Oni, but we can fly over the gate and tell you exactly where they are!

**MOMOTARO:** Good—you'll come back and give us their locations.

**SARU #1:** And we Saru are sneaky and good climbers! We will climb over the gate and unlock it!

**SARU #2:** And then—play tricks on them!

**KIJII:** Yes, distract them from what is about to happen.

**INU:** And then the Inu will rush in with our teeth!

**MOMOKO:** And Momotaro and I will come in with our swords!

**MOMOTARO:** It's the beginning of a plan!

*(They huddle together to finish their plan, build their boat, and silently set sail. Lights dim on the heroes and rise on the Oni as Oni Island comes more fully into view. The Oni are drumming and dancing wantonly, louder and louder, and their Island begins to fill up the stage, protected by a high gate.)*

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