

# A JAPANESE CINDERELLA STORY

A Three-page Play

adapted by Carole L. Cooney

**Setting:** The House of the Stepsisters, the mountains, the Old Lady's house

**Characters:**

**Narrator**

**Rin, the Stepmother** (The name means "cold and severe.")

**Benizara, a stepsister** (The name means "crimson dish.")

**Kakezara, a stepsister** (The name means "broken dish.")

**Yuri, an old Lady** (The name means "servant of the public.")

**A Noble Lord**

**Narrator:** Long ago in the House of the Stepsisters, there lived two young girls. The oldest was named Benizara. Her mother died long ago. The youngest was named Kakezara. Rin, her mother, always treated each girl differently.

**Rin:** (seriously) Kakezara, take this bag and go into the woods to collect chestnuts. Oh, and throw this bag to your stepsister! (loudly) Benizara! Benizara! Don't - come - home - until - your - bag - is - FULL!

**Benizara:** (sweetly) Yes, Stepmother.

**Narrator:** And so the girls walked toward the mountains picking up chestnuts as they went along. Soon, Kakezara's bag was full to the brim.

**Kakezara:** (yelling) Benizara! I'm going home! My bag is full and I'm *very tired!*

**Benizara:** All right, Kakezara. I'm working very hard but my bag is only half full.

**Narrator:** Little did Benizara realize the bag her stepsister gave her had a hole just big enough for small chestnuts to slip through. As she walked deeper into the dark forest, Benizara heard a rustling sound as if a wolf were coming toward her. Quickly, she ran and ran until she saw a light flickering in a little old hut. As she peered in the window, she saw a little old woman spinning thread. She softly knocked on the door.

**Yuri:** Do come in, my child. What may I do for you?

**Benizara:** May I please stay here this night? It is too dark and I am lost.

**Yuri:** My child, my sons are coming home and sorry to say, they are dangerous. I will tell you the fastest way to your house. Because you are so gentle and sweet, I will give you a little gift. It is a magic box. If there is anything that you need, just say what you would like, then tap on the box three times and what you want will appear.

**Benizara:** Thank you so very much, kind lady.

**Narrator:** Benizara followed Yuri's directions. When she arrived home, she quietly went to her bed, placed the magic box in her secret hiding place, and slept peacefully through the night.

**Rin:** Kakezara! Where did you put the chestnuts?

**Kakezara:** On the porch.

**Rin:** You silly daughter! Don't you know that the animals will carry them away? (Loudly) Where - is - your - sister, BENIZARA? Oh... I know. She didn't come home so I imagine the wolves had a tasty meal. Ha! Ha! Ha!

**Kakezara:** Mother! Here she comes.

**Benizara:** Good Morning, Stepmother. Here is my bag of chestnuts. I hope they please you.

**Rin:** CALL ME MOTHER! – You know how I hate the name STEPMOTHER!

**Kakezara:** Mother, aren't we going to the play in the village today? (whining) I need a new kimono. Can't we shop this morning?

**Rin:** Of course! Benizara, because you were out all night, I've made a list of all the work to be done while Kakezara and I shop and then go to the play.

**Narrator:** Benizara's friends were going to the play. They decided to help with the work so they go all together. But! Benizara's clothes were so poor that she was embarrassed to go. Then she remembered the magic box. Quickly she ran to her room and carefully took the box from its hiding place.

**Benizara:** Oh, little box, I would like a beautiful kimono. Now I'll tap you three times: one, two, three. OH! What is this I see? A most *gorgeous red kimono!*

**Narrator:** Quickly, Benizara dressed and joined her friends. At the play, she sat close to her stepsister and noticed she was begging her mother for some candy. Benizara smiled and tossed a few pieces of candy to Kakezara. A Noble Lord in the audience saw what was happening and smiled as he looked at Benizara. The next day, the Noble Lord visited the House of the Stepsisters.

**Lord:** Good Day, Lady Rin. I wish to see the two sisters who live with you.

**Rin:** Of course, most Noble One. Here is *my daughter* Kakezara and...

**Lord:** Yes. Where is the other sister?

**Rin:** (confused) Oh! Well... She must be... in the kitchen cleaning the stove.

**Lord:** Bring her to me at once!

**Narrator:** Benizara stepped forward with her head bowed low. She was so embarrassed to be seen wearing clothes that were shabby and torn. The Noble Lord was not pleased. He asked which sister was at the play wearing

a most excellent red kimono. Lady Rin argued and insisted that it was *her* daughter, Kakezara. Finally, the Noble Lord was so upset that he decided to give the two sisters a test.

**Lord:** Bring me a plate piled high with salt. Stick one pine needle in the top. Now each of you must compose a poem about what is on this plate.

**Kakezara:** (shouting) I'll go first!!

Put some salt on a plate  
Stick a pine needle in the salt:  
It will soon fall over.

**Narrator:** When she had finished, Kakezara hit the Noble Lord on the head and ran into the house, crying. Then, Benizara quietly stepped forward.

**Benizara:** A tray and plate, oh!  
A mountain rises from the plate,  
On it, snow has fallen,  
Rooted deep into the snow,  
A lonely pine tree grows.

**Lord:** You have done well indeed! You are the young woman I have been searching for. I am so pleased with your poem that I wish you to come with me and be my bride.

**Narrator:** Benizara looked up into the Noble Lord's eyes and smiled.

**Benizara:** Oh! Yes. Most Noble Lord.

**Narrator:** And so the Noble Lord and Benizara rode to the palace on a beautiful palanquin, while Lady Rin and Kakezara watched from the dusty road in silence.