



The 47 Ronin: A Story of Samurai Loyalty and Courage

Barry Till

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Here is an exciting true tale of the famous vendetta of the 47 Ronin, the samurai left masterless after their leader, Asano Naganori, was forced to commit seppuku (suicide) by the court official Kira. For two years the men plotted to avenge Asano's death; with cunning and bravery they succeeded, killing sixteen of Kira's men; wounding twenty two, including his grandson; and cutting off Kira's head and carrying it to their lord's grave. The Ronin surrendered and subsequently committed seppuku; they are buried side by side near their master's tomb, in what is now Tokyo.

Naturally, news of such vengeance and martyrdom spread far and wide, with the Ronin becoming national heroes. They were so popular that their saga inspired a series of kabuki plays, the most successful being Chushingura (Treasury of Loyal Retainers). Many artists produced woodblock prints that portrayed the original events, scenes from the kabuki plays, or the actors. Barry Till, curator of Asian Art at the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria and a longtime contributor of articles to Arts of Asia magazine, summarizes the play; prints from the Gallery's collection illustrate the intricate story. As spellbinding as any modern movie, The 47 Ronin will fascinate with its story and appeal with its beautiful artwork.

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