



Seigen examines the medicine Sakura has thrown to him at the fire. A Stage Assistant follows a prompt book to Sakura's left. (Seigen: Morita Kanyai; Sakura: Nakamura Jakumon) Page 309

SAKURA: "Flower of youth broken, trailing sleeve torn asunder, of what matter now are the unjust assaults of the wind and the falling rain?" In truth, how like myself.

[SAKURA sees SEIGEN for the first time, crouching low over the fire, his face bidden. She sees the kimono sleeve.]

A torn kimono sleeve? A priest in tattered garments? Indeed, what memories they recall!

[SEIGEN notices SAKURA's portrait on the arch. His lips move as he reads to himself the caption, "Princess Sakura." Music fades away.]

SEIGEN [voice choking with emotion]: More than any other, dearest Princess Sakura . . . !

[The baby wails.]

SAKURA: My heart is touched by the wandering priest. [Loudly.] Medicine as alms.

[She throws the packet of medicine beside the fire. SEIGEN picks it up, wondering at the familiar voice.]

SEIGEN: That voice . . . ?

SAKURA: That child . . . ?

[SEIGEN looks down at the packet. He recognizes it as the one he gave SAKURA. He looks up, amazed. For the first time SAKURA sees SEIGEN's face and, thinking she recognizes him, starts to rub down the steps. Just then he leaps to his feet, accidentally kicking aside the umbrella. A flurry of rain falls to Ama Oto rain pattern and the insistent sound of a repeatedly struck bell. Instantly the fire is quenched and they are plunged into darkness. They freeze in a pose. Melancholy and lonely sounding Sorabue, "Empty Flute" and Tsutsu Izuu, played by a single shamisen, begin in the background. Desperately, SEIGEN climbs the steps groping for SAKURA; at the same time she descends the steps toward the fire.

They pass in the dark. SEIGEN, at the top of the embankment, realizes he has missed his chance to find her. He slumps with weariness and disappointment. SAKURA reaches the fire and finds no one there. Wondering if it was SEIGEN and her son, she stands pensively looking into the dead ashes. The rain falls bolder still. They raise their umbrellas. The temple bell tolls twice. They pose, subdued and melancholy, as the curtain is pulled closed to muted clacking of the ki. A single loud ki clack signals flute and drums to play spirited Shagiri between acts.]

pinkume

ACT V

IWABUCHI HERMITAGE SCENE

[Two clacks of the ki: shamisen play Anton and drums and bell Zen no Tsutome. Ki clacks rise to a crescendo as the curtain is run open. It is several weeks later, late afternoon and evening. The scene is a dilapidated hermitage near the village of Iwabuchi, outside of Edo. The main room

of the hermitage, drab and water-streaked, faces the audience. On the right is a small temple to Saint Jizō, protector of children, separated from the main room by a gate. Left, a weeping willow looms over a graveyard plot. ZANGETSU, who has been reduced to running the hermitage, stands outside in a dirty gray kimono. He is breaking up a large barrel-shaped coffin with a hammer. In the room NAGAUURA, now his common-law wife, sits before a mirror fixing her hair. SEIGEN, unseen as yet, sleeps behind a low screen. CHŌHACHI, a local farmer, and KURŌHACHI, a rag-and-bottle man, sit on the veranda of the room, their feet on the ground outside. KANROKU, a slave-trader, sits apart from them, casually smoking his pipe. A single clack of the *ki* signals the action to begin.]

KURŌHACHI [*craftily*]: Hey, Zangetsu, is the old priest really better?

ZANGETSU: A little better this morning.

CHŌHACHI: And so you're breaking up his coffin.

[*They laugh.*]

NAGAUURA [*testily*]: It's a used coffin. Where do you think we get firewood?

CHŌHACHI: You use coffins for firewood?

NAGAUURA [*facing him, abruptly*]: Nothing's wasted here. Firewood from coffins, and we sell the small pieces. We turned an old carrying case into a lantern. Our teabags come from corpses' clothes.

KURŌHACHI: That's disgusting. It's filthy. [*Bobs his head, laughing.*] Still, it's not far from what I do, going from mortuary to mortuary every day buying up old clothes.

KANROKU [*knocking the ashes from his pipe casually*]: By the way, remember what I asked you to do? Did you get any?

ZANGETSU [*shaking his head*]: Not yet. It's not enough, but the devils aren't out this year. There just aren't any snakes about. I hear you have a wild man from the mountains in a freak show.

KANROKU: That's right, I've got him in the sideshow up in Ryōgoku, and in a day or two I'm adding a woman snake-handler.

CHŌHACHI [*eagerly*]: If I see any snakes I'll catch 'em for you. I've got some dried lizards. They'd be great for your wild man's dinner.

ZANGETSU [*rises, stretching his sore back*]: What about it, Kanroku? Buy lizards for your wild man.

KANROKU [*laughs*]: He eats them every day. Here. Let's see.

[CHŌHACHI hands a small bag to KANROKU, who looks inside.]

What're these?

CHŌHACHI: Blue lizards.

KANROKU [*banding the bag back in disgust*]: You're something. Who'd eat a blue lizard? Try it once and you'd be a dead man.

CHŌHACHI: They're poison?

KANROKU: Deadly poison.

ZANGETSU: I never heard blue lizards were poison.

CHŌHACHI: Damn! I walked my legs off catching 'em!

[*They turn away.* ZANGETSU puts his tools away.]

KURŌHACHI: Hey, Zangetsu, what do you have to sell?

ZANGETSU: Ha! Nothing! It's a lousy time. No one's died, and that parasite is still sponging off us. [*Gestures to where SEIGEN is sleeping.*] Unless the old woman wants to sell her robe or . . . what about your hair pins, Woman?

[*Proudly NAGAUURA gets out her hair ornaments and the robe SAKURA gave her.*]

NAGAUURA: I have clothes and more hair ornaments than you would believe. Here. They are mine and they are not for sale.

KURŌHACHI [*stily*]: What can you do with a bright kimono and gold pins, Auntie?

NAGAUURA: What a man you are! Can't you guess? I'll wear them and sashay down the street!

[*She waggles her hips. They all laugh.*]

CHŌHACHI: Imagine, an old woman in a girl's kimono! Folks'll be fit to be tied.

KANROKU [*slaps his thigh*]: I have it. I'll put you next to the snake woman. An old hen dressed to the teeth will bring them in faster than the devil's daughter. Ha, ha! Oh, you'll be a great attraction!

KURŌHACHI: Not to me!

CHŌHACHI: I want my money back!

[*The men laugh.* NAGAUURA turns away in a huff.]

NAGAUURA: Spiteful old men.

KURŌHACHI: Well, I have to be going. Coming, Chōhachi?

[*He picks up his bundle.* CHŌHACHI bows to ZANGETSU, who sits smoking. They go off right, laughing and chatting. NAGAUURA rises and goes inside. KANROKU looks about to be sure the others are gone. He slides near ZANGETSU.]

KANROKU [*confidentially*]: Say, Zangetsu, I've got some real news. I came across a terrific beauty wandering along the road from Terashima Field this morning. She pretended to be lost, but the way she sauntered along—it's a put-on. I pulled her off the street into my place. Now I can't get her out. The neighborhood's crawling with toughs waiting for a prize like this. I can sell her for one sweet price if someone doesn't sniff her out first.

But I need a quiet place to hide her, Zangetsu . . .

ZANGETSU: Ho, ho! What's the problem? Bring her over as fast as you can.

KANROKU: Good. Hmm. I can't just take her down the street. She's so great everyone would notice. If there was only something I could disguise

her in . . .

ZANGETSU: Well, well, that's not so difficult. Dress the woman in anything you want. Bring her along. [*He eyes KANROKU.*] Ho, ho. I have it. Take

the old lady's robe. I'll give her some excuse . . .

NAGAUURA [*off*]: You will, will you? Dress some street slut you've never seen in my precious wedding kimono? [*Opens the sliding doors and glares at him.*] You're mighty free with my things. How dare you? You're a fool. [*Closes the door.*]

ZANGETSU [*struggling*]: That's the way it is, then. Bang her some way.

KANROKU: I have to have something to disguise her in.

ZANGETSU: Ah, ah! Right before our eyes. Here. Use this.

[ZANGETSU gets SEIGEN's black robe that is draped over the screen.]
KANROKU: A monk's robe. Anything. Who cares? Even a battered Princess can't walk the streets naked! Now, we have to cover her face too.

[ZANGETSU gets SEIGEN's battered hat from the wall.]

ZANGETSU: Take the straw hat. It will go with the robe.

KANROKU: I'll dress her and be back in an instant. [Winks.] You'll see what she's like.

ZANGETSU [rubs his hands gleefully]: Hurry, Kanroku, hurry!
KANROKU: I'm on my way.

[Shamisen play Anton and drums and bell Zen no Tsutome. KANROKU rises and trots onto the hanamichi carrying the robe and hat. At seven-three he passes OJŪ, a woman of about thirty, dressed in a conservative purple and blue striped kimono. In spite of her ordinary dress she is obviously of the samurai class. She is the wife of SHICHIRO, unknown to either ZANGETSU or NAGAURA. For the sake of the Yoshida family, she is searching for SAKURA's child. She crosses to the gate. Music ends.]

OJŪ [politely bowing]: Excuse me, Sir, is this Iwabuchi Hermitage?

ZANGETSU [perfunctorily]: Yes, yes. What is it?
OJŪ: Forgive me, please. I live near Asakusa. My only child died, and my grief is inconsolable.

[ZANGETSU looks up to see an attractive woman. His attitude immediately changes. Eagerly he opens the door for her.]

ZANGETSU: Ah, is that so, my good woman?

OJŪ: Shortly after his death I heard of your temple, where merciful Saint Jizō intercedes for children who . . . [She pretends to cry.] We are promised only a short life on earth, but at least the living can help the dead attain salvation by praying to Buddha. I beg you, perform services in his memory.

[She opens a small bundle and takes out coins wrapped in white paper. She places them in his hand and bows respectfully. ZANGETSU befs the coins, tucks them away, and chuckles good-naturedly.]

ZANGETSU: My, my, how politely you ask. As master of the hermitage, I promise to pray my heart out for the little dear's soul. Very sad, very sad, indeed. And the child . . . ?

kyōcho

OJŪ: An only child, still a baby when smallpox carried him away.

ZANGETSU: My, my! "Namu Amida Butsu. Namu Amida Butsu."

ZANGETSU [effusively]: Of course you may, of course. Buddha will be honored having you by his side. Heh, heh!

OJŪ: Then excuse me. I won't be a minute.
[Shamisen play Anton and drums and bell play Zen no Tsutome as OJŪ bows politely and enters the ramshackle temple. ZANGETSU looks after her.]

ZANGETSU [to himself]: A young woman coming to pray like that. Admirable. Damn good figure, too. What a waste. A ripe young thing like that . . .

NAGAURA [entering]: Eh? What ripe young thing are you talking about? in to pray.

NAGAURA [outraged]: What? Good-looking, you say? Why you incense-sniffer!

[To loud batin tsuke beats, she grabs her ear and pulls him to the floor. They face each other, on their knees.]

ZANGETSU: Don't call me an incense-sniffer. Hag!

[He pushes her, she sprawls on the floor.]

NAGAURA: Hag? You dare call me that?

[Her rhythmic, regal speech contrasts with her deplorable appearance.]
Now in my declining years am I condemned, to this ten-foot square hole of a hermitage; I the Princess Sakura's favorite lady, a woman of Yoshida, of noble station, lured by a dissolute priest to my destruction? I'm a hag, am I? As far as I'm concerned you look like Bajū the horse-faced actor! Mule! Ass!

ZANGETSU [sarcastically]: One female turns up and you scream with envy. Caterwauling bitch.

NAGAURA: Bitch? You . . . you babbling Buddha-head!

ZANGETSU: Foul-mouthed baboon!

NAGAURA: Baboon? Baboon!!

[They scuffle to Nanameki Okashimi. "Comic Lewdness," a playful melody, and to batin tsuke beats. Spluttering with rage, NAGAURA pummels him. He trips her. She tries to rip the kimono from his back. Intimidated, he crawls away, but she shoves him into the screen with a crash. SEIGEN and the baby are seen lying side by side under a quilt. The child wails. SEIGEN wakes. He is shockingly wasted from illness; his hair is uncombed, his face is gaunt, his ribs show black through the front of a dirty gray kimono. He holds SAKURA's kimono in trembling hands.]

ZANGETSU and NAGAURA bow in a show of solicitude.]

ZANGETSU: Most honored Reverend Segen . . .

NAGAURA: . . . are you feeling better?

[He does not seem to hear. Shamisen play quiet Mokuro, as SEIGEN speaks in a rasping voice.]

SEIGEN: The kimono pattern is as I remembered it, her scent lingering faintly on the trailing sleeve; am I dreaming a vision or can this Segen, with his beloved once more, with his dear lover, within this mortal world . . . ?

[Soundless, racking coughs cut off his reverie. He crumples forward, clinging to the robe. ZANGETSU helps him to a sitting position.]

ZANGETSU: Ah, dear Master, do not speak of what is unreal.
SEIGEN [dazed]: Zangetsu? Lady Nagaura? Can it be you? And this robe, how did it . . . ?

[OJŪ comes stealthily out of the temple and hides by the gate.]

17. One more instance of a character being listened to or actor playing the role here Otani Bajū playing Zangetsu. The lines also contain a rather elaborate play on words: *bajū* means "horse-ten," "Zangetsu calls Nagaura *baba*," or "old hag," and the retorts that he is a *bubu uma*, literally "race-track (baba) horse (uma)."

NAGAUURA (*bows politely*): A gift from Princess Sakura from the time I

served her at the mansion.

SEIGEN: Just a few moments ago while I was sleeping, I saw in a dreaming state, you Princess Sakura, toward whom my deep bitterness welled as if to cry out; when the crying of the infant aroused consciousness, my eyes slowly opening to look on this robe. Indeed this truly happened. You do, Princess Sakura, remember me, do you not? Can it be you do not know my tribulation, since the night we were parted at the river bank; from that wretched beginning, this Seigen took in your child and raised him as he would his own; in spite of the calumny heaped upon a priest; who wandered homeless in the hope that someday the child, would somehow lure you to him, Princess Sakura; and so in this way at last meet with you once more! [*As if listening.*] Ah, why can I not hear you, Princess Sakura! How impossible it was for me to have known; when we two exchanged our vows of unchanging love; that would last from previous lives into the future; and we made the heartfelt pledge to die together; in youthful indiscretion, that by cowardice I would be led to error; so the more precious in this, all now that remains . . .

[*He takes out the incense case from his breast. Speaking normally.*]

So precious I keep it close to my heart. Ah, to meet and give it to you. When I remember that night at Mimeguri Shrine; passing by one another in the rainy dark; the medicine you threw down by the flickering fire; when you heard the crying sound of an unseen child; was the very medicine Seigen earlier had given to you, Princess, by the Inase River. When I think that it was you whom I was seeking; from whom I was helplessly parted in the dark; and now here to see without even knowing it; Princess Sakura's dearly cherished crimson robe; doubly I feel my heart being crushed to extinction. Ah, such precious elegance!

[SEIGEN gazes at the kimono in one hand and the incense case in the other. He poses. Music stops. ZANGETSU thinks the case contains money]

SEIGEN has received to care for the baby. He bows solicitously.]

ZANGETSU [*travily*]: Then, dear Master Seigen, are you caring for Princess Sakura's child?

[SEIGEN realizes he has gone too far. He quickly hides the case in the breast of his kimono.]

SEIGEN: No, no, no. A priest vows to help all men. Why I spoke her name, I do not know. Perhaps she appeared in an unchaste dream. "Namu Amida Butsu. Namu Amida Butsu."

[*He prays to hide his confusion. The child wails. ZANGETSU is annoyed.*]

NAGAUURA: Reverend Seigen, a man cannot rear an infant, and I can't help with my withered breasts.

ZANGETSU: This crumbling house is no place to raise a child, dear Master.

SEIGEN: What can I do?

[OJŪ throws open the door and enters.]

OJŪ [*resolutely*]: There is a way.

OJŪ [*bows*]: I could not help hearing of your trouble, Reverend Seigen, raising the child. My only child has died. In place of it I will care for this motherless one.

SEIGEN [*hesitantly*]: Your words seem trustworthy. He has no breast for this

ZANGETSU [*callously*]: We can't even get a wet nurse. Remember what happened to that woman?

NAGAUURA: What a person she was. She just gobbled up the coins I gave her and off she went. What do you say, Zangetsu, should we ask her to take the child?

OJŪ [*improvising*]: Ah, if you agree, the child will live in my home in Sanya.

My husband serves several restaurants there—his name is Sento of Arake. I am his wife, OJŪ. [*She bows.*]

SEIGEN: Since you sound reliable, and it would be good for the child . . .

[ZANGETSU, delighted, leaps up to get the child.]

ZANGETSU: Generous woman, we are ever in your debt.

SEIGEN [*relieved*]: For the child's sake I ask it.

[OJŪ receives the baby. She notices SAKURA's kimono sleeve.]

OJŪ: Is this a torn kimono sleeve?

SEIGEN: It is all the clothes he has. Such merciful charity you show him.

[SEIGEN weeps as OJŪ deftly wraps the child in a cloth she takes from her bundle. She returns the kimono sleeve to SEIGEN and, cradling the

child, moves quickly to open the gate.]

OJŪ: Do not worry about the child, please. Before you know it he'll be back.

his smiling face . . .

ZANGETSU [*protesting*]: There's no need, absolutely none . . .

NAGAUURA: . . . Madam, take him and go.

SEIGEN: Care for him, Madam . . .

[Shamisen play Anton and drums and bell Zen no Tsuome. NAGAUURA waves OJŪ away and closes the door behind her. ZANGETSU sighs with

relief. Overjoyed to have SAKURA's baby, OJŪ buries onto the bananichi

and out of sight. Music ends.]

SEIGEN: There are still some in the world who can show pity. But pitiless is the

owner of this robe . . . Ah, my chest! I am dizzy!

[*He clutches his chest in a spasm of pain.*]

[*He clutches his chest in a spasm of pain.*]

ZANGETSU: Come, dear Master, lie down. Here, here. You mustn't catch

cold.

[ZANGETSU pretends to fuss over SEIGEN, helping him lie down. He

replaces the screen. He poses. A temple bell tolls. Stealthily NAGAUURA

beckons to him.]

NAGAUURA: Psst. Psst. What was it he took out just now? Did you see it,

Zangetsu?

[*The bell tolls.*]

ZANGETSU [*matter-of-factly*]: I saw it. I saw it. It's a purse for sure. The

sooner it's finished the better. [*He sees the discarded bag of dried lizards.*]

Ah! That's it. Into the hot water . . .

NAGAURA: ... blue lizards?

[The bell tolls. Ominous Kaza Oto drum pattern. ZANGETSU tiptoes to the fire, lifts the lid of the teapot, and stirs into the water a small amount of blue powder from the bag. NAGAURA holds her breath.]

ZANGETSU: Now ...

NAGAURA: For Reverend Seigen ...?

ZANGETSU: ... a drink of poison. [Bitterly.] What of it? If we don't

poison the bag of bones today, he'll be dead tomorrow anyway. I say good riddance. Ha! Damned sponging hypocrite, he should thank us for ending his misery.

NAGAURA [sighing]: Poison is simple, simple is best. It's boiling, Zangetsu.

[Kaza Oto softens. ZANGETSU kneels by the fire and with a wooden dipper fills a teacup with the liquid, warding off the poisonous vapors with his sleeve. NAGAURA cringes. ZANGETSU crosses to SEIGEN and carefully places the cup by his head. He lifts the screen and leans it against the back wall. He and NAGAURA kneel at a respectful distance from the priest. Music stops.]

ZANGETSU [solicitously]: Are you awake, dear Master? We have brought some medicine.

[Slowly SEIGEN sits up. ZANGETSU pushes the cup toward him.]

SEIGEN: Medicine, for me?

ZANGETSU [heartily]: Oh, yes, dear Master. The wife and I grieve that we can't usually offer medicine, but the color of your face today roused us to pity. We got this from the doctor in the village. It's best piping hot. Heh, heh! Here, Master Seigen.

[SEIGEN peers into the offered cup, feeling instinctively that something is wrong. He poses.]

SEIGEN: Mankind's birth and death are decreed by Karma. Unlike an ordinary person, a priest commits grievous sin if he tries to halt his death. What others would thank you for is repugnant to me. Please throw out the potion. I do not wish to alter fate.

[He pushes the cup away.]

NAGAURA [gently, mollifying him]: Indeed, it is so, but please drink one sip ...

ZANGETSU [offers the cup again]: ... of this special brew.

SEIGEN [drawing back]: I said there is no need. I do not want ...

ZANGETSU: ... our medicine? [Politely holds the cup to SEIGEN's lips.]

One sip, good Master ...

SEIGEN: No.

ZANGETSU: ... will do you good. Come ...

SEIGEN: No, no.

ZANGETSU: ... drink.

[SEIGEN pulls away frightened. ZANGETSU drops the pretense of solicitude. He throws SEIGEN to the floor, to baton tsuke beats, and thrusts the cup to his lips. Harshly.]

You will drink it, Seigen!

[Shamisen play Sugomi. Kaza Oto wind pattern continues softly. ZANGETSU holds SEIGEN. They pose.]

So you sniffed out our plan and to keep from drinking made a pretty speech about Karma? Then you know I'm a desperate man. Yes, Seigen, the cup is ... poison.

SEIGEN: I was right to be suspicious. You are a pair of wicked ...

ZANGETSU: Bah! You'll stop grumbling when you're dead! ...

Nagaure.

NAGAURA: Drink ...

ZANGETSU: ... damn you!

SEIGEN: No! I won't drink poison!

ZANGETSU: You will drink, you will!

[Music grows louder. Tsuke beats accent SEIGEN's struggle. NAGAURA takes the cup from ZANGETSU and tries to force the poison down SEIGEN's throat, as ZANGETSU holds him. SEIGEN clenches his teeth, then stuffs SAKURA's kimono sleeve into his mouth. ZANGETSU rips the sleeve away and sits on SEIGEN's chest. SEIGEN strikes the cup, the poison splashes across his face. He screams and turns away. ZANGETSU wraps a cloth around SEIGEN's neck and twists, as NAGAURA beats him with a piece of kindling. A STAGE ASSISTANT quickly alters SEIGEN's makeup. When SEIGEN manages to turn front, we see that a large purple blotch disfigures the left side of his face.]

NAGAURA: One side of his face ... it's horrible!

ZANGETSU [not letting go, peers over SEIGEN's shoulder]: For heaven's sake, be quiet. The poison scared his face is all. He's not strangled yet, so ...

[Music and tsuke swell. ZANGETSU yanks hard on the end of the cloth, twisting it tightly around SEIGEN's neck. SEIGEN claws the air in agony. He falls to the floor, rolling under the bed quilt. Sargely ZANGETSU and NAGAURA beat him with sticks, stopping only when they are exhausted. ZANGETSU pulls the quilt away. SEIGEN lies motionless, blood—applied by a STAGE ASSISTANT—flows from his mouth. Music stops. ZANGETSU and NAGAURA pose.]

NAGAURA [yearning]: Is he dead? Is he, Zangetsu?

ZANGETSU [whispering]: Wait. I'll see if his breath's stopped.

[He holds his hand over SEIGEN's mouth.]

NAGAURA: Well? Is he? Is he?

ZANGETSU [matter-of-factly]: Hm. He is. He is. Gone for good.

NAGAURA: Quick, the money, Zangetsu! Get the money!

[ZANGETSU bites through the cord fastening the case around the priest's neck. He grins and bejfs the package. His face falls.]

ZANGETSU: What's this?

NAGAURA [trembling in anticipation]: Is there money? Is there? ZANGETSU [unwrapping the cloth]: It's wrapped like a stack of gold pieces, but ... it's too light. [Opens case.] Damn. An incense case! [He tosses it in the corner.] We've broken our backs for nothing.

NAGAURA: That can't be helped. But, Zangetsu, what are we going to do if people start saying we murdered him?

ZANGETSU: Hm. What should we do? It's all over if the neighbors see him. Still, he was a sick man. It's enough to say he died.

NAGAURA: Yes.

ZANGETSU: I'll cover him up with the bedding. *[He folds the bedding over SEIGEN.]* There, that does it. If anyone asks what happened, just say, "Reverend Seigen passed away from mortal illness."

NAGAURA: I will, I will. *[Looks at SEIGEN.]* How long is he going to stay that way?

ZANGETSU *[considering]*: How long can he stay that way? You go out and bring back the gravedigger, Gonsuke.

NAGAURA: But . . . Gonsuke? Is it safe?

ZANGETSU: He's a good-for-nothing, but if we do it ourselves he'll be suspicious. Go fetch him. Hurry.

NAGAURA *[bustles over to the gate]*: I'm going, I'm going, Zangetsu dear.

[Pertly turns back.] Shall I take a little stroll?

[They laugh. She turns and trots off right as shamisen play Anton and drums and bell lively Zen no Tsutome. Music softens.]

ZANGETSU: Well, well. The crime is finished in a wink. Still, he was a priest. I should say a prayer for him.

[He hides SEIGEN with the screen and, kneeling before the Buddhist altar upstage, piously rubs his rosary beads and mumbles a prayer. GONSUKE saunters on from the right, carrying a hoe and a shovel over his shoulder. He wears an old, patched kimono casually tucked up in the back. Music ends.]

GONSUKE *[bored]*: "Come quick," she said, so Gonsuke's here. Did someone bring in a stiff?

[Quickly ZANGETSU rises. Joking and gossiping at high speed, he edges GONSUKE away from SEIGEN.]

ZANGETSU: Ah, Gonsuke. Hello, hello. It's no poor soul brought in. It was, bless us all, poor Reverend Seigen, come to us for aid and comfort such a short time ago. Alas, he's gone, passed away in illness this very day.

GONSUKE: The old priest died? Too bad.

ZANGETSU: In an instant he was gone.

[They stop left by the willow tree.]

GONSUKE: Do you want to put him here?

ZANGETSU: Right here, right here, good Gonsuke. Nothing could be better. I'll help you. Just a minute. I'll help you.

[Shamisen play Mokugyo in the background. Batan tsuke beats mark each shovel of dirt GONSUKE throws out of the grave. ZANGETSU ties back his sleeves and is soon helping. As they shovel, a trap opens in the stage and SAKURA on by the band. She wears SEIGEN's hat and black robe. A purple hood covers her face. At seven-three she forces him to stop.]
SAKURA *[elegantly]*: Good Sir, you lead me, pray, to what abode?
KANROKU: Girl, I told you. Cut out the fancy talk. Now, do you see that nice place over there? It's quiet and there's a woman in the house. That's where I'm taking you.

18. As one of the many unemployed rōnin of the period, Gonsuke had to scrape together a living any way he could. It is not strange that he moves from place to place in and around Edo and from job to job during the play.

SAKURA: You pay me undeserved honor, Sir.

KANROKU: Ah, ah! The big words never stop. Come on.

[They cross onstage. Music ends. KANROKU calls through the gate.]
ZANGETSU: Ah, Kanroku, come in, come in!

[ZANGETSU drops his kimono in back to look more dignified, and SUKE continues digging.]
KANROKU: Isn't she something? I put her in one of my wife's old hoods, so no one could see her cute face on the way.

ZANGETSU *[chuckling]*: Ho, ho, you're a sexy little riddle! Can you fix it up, Kanroku?

KANROKU: Can I? I'm a specialist when it comes to bargaining with Kappara.¹⁹ madams. Here's what we'll do: I'll leave the girl with you and go alone to make the deal. You're her father or brother, I'll say. Then the two of us take the girl to the whorehouse. . . .

ZANGETSU: And I say I'm her brother?

KANROKU: You ask for cash. Be sure to ask for cash.

ZANGETSU *[admiringly]*: That's a smart trick. We'll have the money in our hands tonight, then?

KANROKU: Would I come with a female I couldn't sell? Do your part, that's all. *[To SAKURA.]* Don't go away. I won't be long. *[To ZANGETSU.]* I'll have it settled and be back before you know it. Remember, I'm leaving the little jewel in your care.

[ZANGETSU sees him through the gate, bowing and rubbing his hands in anticipation of the money.]

ZANGETSU: Yes, yes, hurry, hurry. I'll watch her like a hawk.

[Shamisen plays Mokugyo. KANROKU crosses onto the bananmichi. At seven-three he stops and turns back.]

KANROKU: Stay right there, girl. You hear?

SAKURA *[elegantly]*: Return without delay, for I shall be alone in this place while you are at an unknown destination.

KANROKU: I'll be back, I'll be back. Listen to her. Ever hear anything like that?

ZANGETSU: "Return without delay." "Ho, ho! Amazing!"

KANROKU: I'm off.

[SAKURA bows politely. KANROKU runs off. Music stops. ZANGETSU turns to SAKURA, oozing friendliness.]
ZANGETSU: There, there, dear girl, don't be afraid. You're safe from harm with me. We're no big noisy temple, just a little country chapel dedicated to jizō, protector of children. I, my dear, am the chaplain. Set your heart at ease.

SAKURA *[bows regally]*: Your intention, my good priest, is a source of gratification. You should not, Sir, abandon me.

[Hearing SAKURA's voice, GONSUKE stops work, amazed.]

19. A brothel district of the most sordid kind, unlicensed and illegal, at the edge of the city.

ZANGETSU: Hoo! That's a damned patronizing speech. Don't you worry about being abandoned. Deante. *[Tries to see her face.]* Here now, there's no need to be afraid. It's turned a trifle hottish. Let's take off that stifling hood? Heh, heh!

SAKURA: If it is certain . . .

ZANGETSU: No harm will come of it.

[He removes her hat and hood and is dumbfounded to see SAKURA.]

GONSUKE *puts down his shovel and slips behind the tree to watch unseen.*

You? Princess Sakura?

SAKURA *[looking carefully at him]*: And are you not the priest . . . ?

ZANGETSU *[piously]*: . . . of Kiyomizu, Zangetsu. How good it is to see you, my Lady. Welcome, welcome. Please come inside, my Lady.

[He leads her into the room, holding her hand as long as he dares. He helps her remove the black robe. She wears only a thin, pale pink kimono beneath it. Wearily, she sinks down, stage left in the place of honor.]

[Kneeling right, he lets his gaze linger on her figure. He speaks smugly.]

All worldly things, they say, must change, but my, my, to think of Princess Sakura, dressed like this, here in my rude hovel . . . Hmm.

[He is reminded of SEIGEN. Half to himself.]

It must be destiny. I'd get nowhere if he were here. Killing him off was heaven-sent.

SAKURA *[partly overhearing]*: Kill, my good priest? Your words are frightening.

ZANGETSU: No at all. I was saying I should . . . ah . . . kill the pesky mosquitoes buzzing about, though heaven-sent, should they bother my Lady. Heh, heh!

[Pretending to swat mosquitoes, he slides closer to SAKURA.]

It's a chilly spring but already mosquitoes are biting. Ha, ha! With the wind turned chill you'll catch your death of cold in such a thin kimono, Princess. Let me help you keep warm, my Lady.

[He scurries upstage to get SAKURA's old "scarlet princess" robe.]

NAGAUURA *returns. Seeing ZANGETSU with SAKURA, she conceals herself outside the gate.]*

SAKURA *[at a loss]*: The kimono I used to wear?

ZANGETSU: You remember? It is the very robe you gave to Nagaura in parting, at Kiyomizu Temple.

SAKURA: Then . . . my dear maid . . . ?

ZANGETSU: . . . lives here in the hermitage. My Princess, come put on your old robe. You just follow me and don't worry about a thing.

[Samisen play Mokugyo. ZANGETSU rises and takes her by the hand. He covers his actions with a constant stream of reassuring chatter. SAKURA looks about expectantly for NAGAUURA and allows herself to be led into the small room left. Music softens.]

GONSUKE *[scowling darkly]*: It's the princess, no mistake. What the hell is she doing here?

NAGAUURA: What is depraved Zangetsu up to? How dare he bring Princess

Sakura into my house and dress her in my clothes? Ah, it's clear what's on his mind! He's going to set her up as his wife on the sly! How infuriating!

[ZANGETSU returns with SAKURA now wearing the "scarlet princess" kimono. NAGAUURA and GONSUKE now wearing the "scarlet princess" and shine like the Cherry Blossom Princess of old in the kimono you once gave to your maid Nagaura. Pointing to the box of hair ornaments.]

ZANGETSU: There we are. That's a good girl. You've shed your drab clothes and shine like the Cherry Blossom Princess of old in the kimono you once gave to your maid Nagaura. *[Pointing to the box of hair ornaments.]*

Everything is here you might need, just settle right in.

SAKURA: Has dear Nagaura really come to live under this roof?

ZANGETSU: That's right. Don't you worry about a thing. We'll be by your side to ward off the slightest trouble. In exchange for that, Princess, won't you agree to the request I made a Kamakura?

[She sits. He leans over her from behind.]

SAKURA: Kamakura? What do you mean?

ZANGETSU: You should know what I mean. Heh, heh. It's a lewd thing to

say, but you made me passionate back at Cherry Valley, Princess. Before

anything could come of it though, the trouble over Seigen erupted at the

hermitage. But there's no one here to stop us. So, let me tell you, Princess

[He tries to put his hand in her kimono. She shakes him off.]

SAKURA: You are impudent. I do not permit your wickedness.

ZANGETSU *[dropping his cajoling tone]*: Do not permit? Listen, girl, things

are different now. You're no better than a tramp. Whether you like it or

not, I'm having you.

SAKURA: You are a miscreant. Do not touch me.

[Samisen play strong melody. Amba. Bizen tsuke brass punctuate their short struggle. ZANGETSU roughly embraces SAKURA. She tries to pull

free but cannot. He straddles her, jumblingly trying to undo her sash.]

GONSUKE and NAGAUURA burst into the room. GONSUKE sends

ZANGETSU sprawling. NAGAUURA holds him by the collar. Music stops.

[They pose in a mie to battari tsuke beats.]

GONSUKE: Discovered! Whoremonger!

NAGAUURA: Discovered! Adulterer!

ZANGETSU: Ah, ah! The gravedigger! The old woman!

NAGAUURA *[pounding him]*: Yes, it's me. *[To SAKURA.]* Your lady-in-

waiting.

SAKURA *[relieved]*: Dear companion, it pleases me to see you here.

NAGAUURA: Agh! With my own eyes I saw you take the robe from him and

put it on—the one you gave me. He's my man, Princess. You were stealing

him away!

[She turns her back on SAKURA and slips the floor in anger.]

GONSUKE: Damned sutra mumbler! *[Laughs harshly.]* I, gravedigger Gon-

suke, have found a wife stealer! *[Strikes a brass pose.]*

ZANGETSU: What do you mean, you tramp? Your wife? Married to the

princess? Ha, ha, ha! You're mad!

[Tries to rise. GONSUKE shoves him to the floor.]

GONSUKE: I'm not mad and it's not a lie. Princess Sakura is mine.

SAKURA [*recognizing GONSUKE*]: Is it you, from whom I was parted after briefly meeting at Kiyomizu . . . ?

GONSUKE: You bet. You swore undying love to Tsurigane Gonsuke.

[*To ZANGETSU.*] This is my wife the Princess, the Princess my wife.

SAKURA [*modestly*]: Indeed, this gentleman is my precious master, toward whom I shall allow no improper behavior. A wife serves her husband even into the life hereafter. We are pledged eternally. My words are the truth.

[NAGAURA and ZANGETSU exchange astonished glances.]

GONSUKE: Do you hear? We're man and wife. What the hell do you mean getting fresh with my wife? Well? To get an answer do I have to cut off your fat head?

[GONSUKE pulls a butcher knife from his sash. ZANGETSU falls back, but is undaunted.]

ZANGETSU: It won't be easy to take. Look here, Gonsuke, how can I believe you're married? Where's the license? Where's your proof?

GONSUKE: Proof more certain than a license . . . is this!

[*With a proud flourish GONSUKE flicks up the kimono sleeve to reveal his tattoo.*]

ZANGETSU [*protesting*]: A tattoo? What proof is that?

GONSUKE: It's my symbol—symbol of Tsurigane Gonsuke, digger of corpses' graves.

[*He bares SAKURA's forearm, revealing her tattoo. She hides her face.*]

NAGAURA: It's too fantastic to believe . . .

ZANGETSU: . . . the princess' arm, tattooed like yours?

GONSUKE [*proudly*]: Man and wife united with the words "our destiny" written on our flesh. We two bear a beauty mark of mutual love.

ZANGETSU [*at a loss*]: Well, then . . . ?

GONSUKE [*bravely*]: Yes, then?

ZANGETSU: Then . . .

GONSUKE: Then?

GONSUKE and ZANGETSU [*alternately at increasing speed*]: Then, then, then, then!

GONSUKE: Then, lecher, I'll have your damned head!

[GONSUKE slides his right arm free of the kimono sleeve and sits resolutely on the floor. He slaps the knife before him, crosses his legs, and, beating, ZANGETSU crawls meekly to NAGAURA for protection.]

ZANGETSU: I wish it was a dream. I wish it was a dream.

NAGAURA: See what your wenching has come to? A carnal heart brings calamity. Gonsuke, let me intercede for him. I saw it all, but had no part in his wicked scheme. Won't you be reconciled?

GONSUKE [*contemptuously*]: The only way a woman is going to save that

fathead is to come up with a fat ransom and do it quick.

NAGAURA: Is that what you suggest? A ransom? As you know, we have no estate at our disposal. [*Sighing*] And as newlyweds we've no money. Would you be content with a ransom of one hundred gold ryō?

GONSUKE [*trying to bide his delight*]: What? A hundred ryō?

NAGAURA [*continues smoothly*]: Paying as deposit one tenth of one ryō now.

GONSUKE: Miserable bitch! Am I a fool? What the hell will a tenth of a gold ryō buy? Pay up or I'll take his head!

[GONSUKE picks up the knife and rises as if to attack. ZANGETSU cowers behind NAGAURA.]

ZANGETSU: Offer him more, please, Wife, please!

NAGAURA: Very well. You are incorrigible, but even now not wholly hateful. [*Bows to GONSUKE.*] How much will satisfy you, Gonsuke?

GONSUKE [*sitting cross-legged*]: What can you squeeze from a corpse-washing reprobate priest? Here's what I'll do. Give me the broken-down

temple, the house, what's in it, and your clothes down to your bare skin. The whole lot's not worth a damn but I'll settle for it.

ZANGETSU: Yah! On top of the house and all the furniture . . .

NAGAURA: . . . you want me naked, too?

ZANGETSU [*waiting*]: You'll ruin us!

GONSUKE [*laughs*]: Should I take your head?

ZANGETSU [*whining*]: Ah, ah! What can I do?

GONSUKE [*barbly*]: Hand it over!

ZANGETSU: You'll have it. You'll have it. [*Pleads with NAGAURA.*]

Dearest Wife, take off your clothes for my sake.

NAGAURA [*lacs the pouting young maid*]: I won't do it. Shame on you, embarrassing me.

ZANGETSU: Don't babble when my head's at stake. You said you'd fix it.

Give him your clothes.

[ZANGETSU takes off her long sash and is peeling off her kimono when

GONSUKE seizes ZANGETSU's clothes from behind, and with a single

deft motion whirls ZANGETSU around and whisks off his kimono.

ZANGETSU and NAGAURA tumble down the steps. They clutch their

undergarments and look down at their bare legs, astonished that they have

been so suddenly dispossessed.]

GONSUKE [*poses*]: Riffraff! Trash! House, temple, clothes . . . everything

here is mine. Get out, both of you!

[ZANGETSU and NAGAURA parody the typical scene of pathetic, star-

crossed lovers forced to flee because of their transgressions.]

NAGAURA [*limp, pleading voice*]: Ah! Lord Zangestu . . .

ZANGETSU [*nobility itself*]: Ah! Lady Nagaura . . .

BOTH: Alas! Our condition is indeed pitious.

[*They delicately wipe away tears with their sleeves. ZANGETSU looks into the sky. He shivers and pulls his under kimono tightly around him.*]

ZANGETSU: Too cruel to be borne, the heavens darken and rain seems about

to fall. Good Gonsuke, lend us one umbrella, as is customary in these sad cases.²⁰

GONSUKE: That's easy. Have this elegant one.

[From a rack on the wall, he takes a common paper umbrella and disdainfully throws it at ZANGETSU's feet. Quiet Ama Oto rain pattern begins. With a sigh ZANGETSU picks up the umbrella, symbol of their wandering to come, and helps NAGAURA rise. They face front and pose, pitifully. They speak in an exaggeratedly poetic manner.]

ZANGETSU: "Great melancholy rain drops splatter from the sky . . .

NAGAURA: . . . the devil himself would weep . . .

BOTH: . . . to behold our woe."

[Rain pattern continues. As the CHORUS sings romantic Omoi Kasanaru, "To Remember Again," they enact in delicate mime a lovers' "travel dance." He tucks her hand under his arm, nods to her bravely, and leads her through the gate. Like a young maiden, she walks daintily, glancing about. Outside the gate they stop. He opens the umbrella and holds it protectively overhead. She hides her face in embarrassment. He strikes a manly pose, then wistfully notices that the umbrella is hanging in shreds. They move in gentle dance steps onto the bananichi.]

CHORUS [sings Omoi Kasanaru²¹ to shamisen accompaniment]:

My heart is troubled endlessly worried;

Especially in the evening sadness comes . . .

[At seven-three they silently weep and cling together under the umbrella. The audience laughs and applauds. Suddenly ZANGETSU drops his melancholy pose. Closing the umbrella with a flourish, he turns to the musicians in the room offstage right.]

ZANGETSU [boulliant]: Cut it! Cut! Musicians, play something with life in it! [Drums and bells strike up the rollicking rhythm Kangara, "Bright Beat," and shamisen join in with Suika Busuika, "Chic and Vulgar." ZANGETSU tosses the umbrella to NAGAURA and they begin a comic folk dance. They circle one another energetically. She snuggles up to him; he gives her a playful push that sends her sprawling. He dances off laughing. She flourishes the umbrella and dances after him to accelerating bata-bata tsuke beats. GONSUKE watches them go out of sight as the music fades away.]

GONSUKE: Damn fools!

[He sits carelessly stage left, in the place of honor. SAKURA, who has been cowering upstage, sits in the subservient position to his right.]

SAKURA: My abiding wish has been to meet you, dear Husband. From the beginning I have served you, though you are of common parentage and of lowly breeding. Our deep vow has been ill-fated. Our poor child . . .

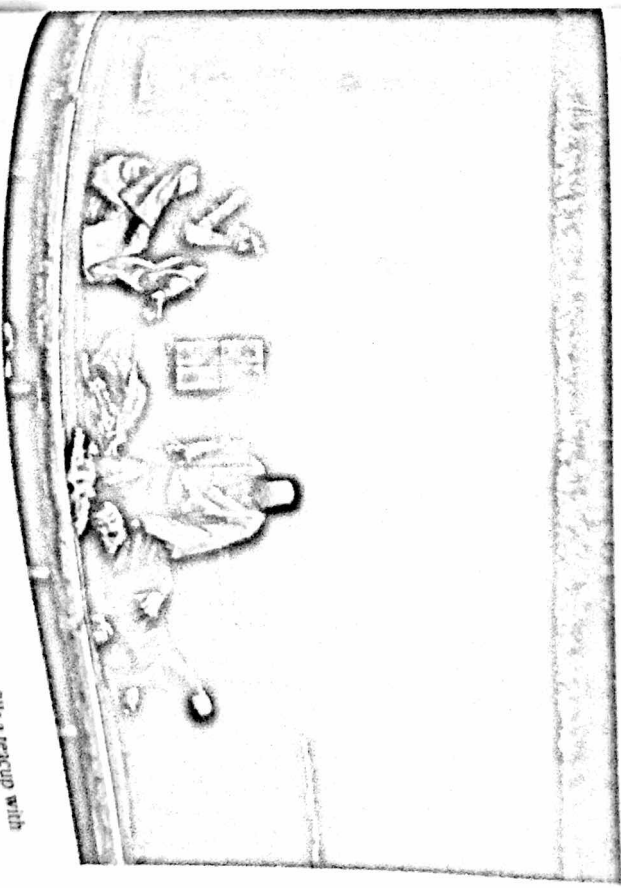
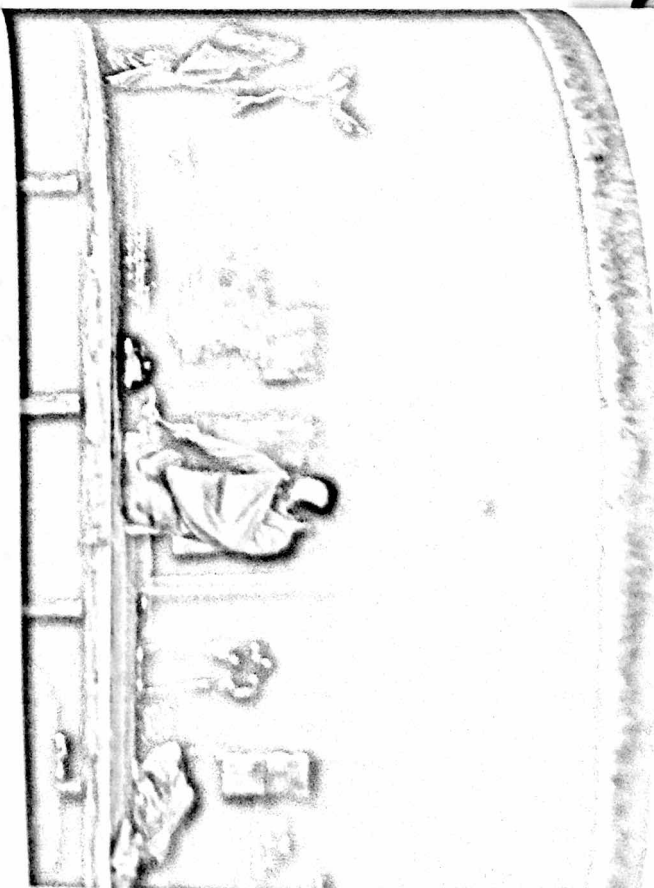
GONSUKE: What'd you do with the brat, Princess?

²⁰ A priest expelled from a temple was allowed to take with him nothing except one paper umbrella with which to ward off the elements.

²¹ Taken from the kabuki dance play *Sagi Musume* (1762).

michiyuki

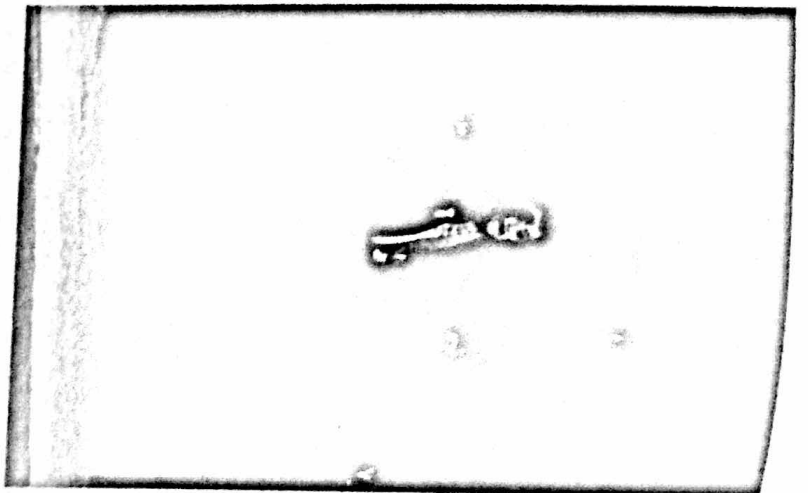
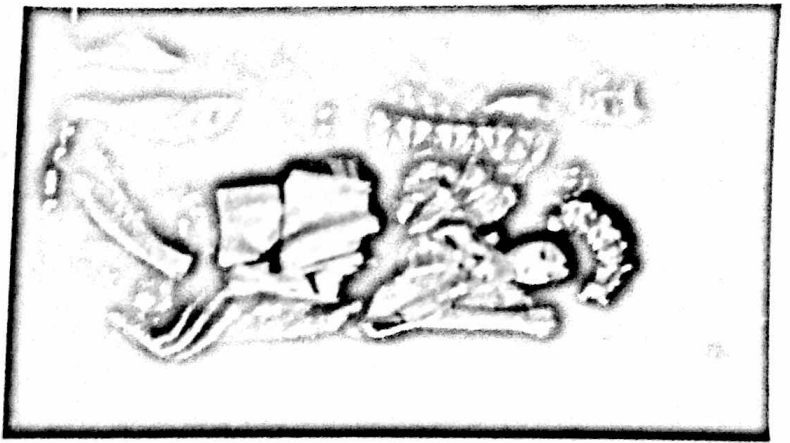
shichigocho



Zangetsu kneels by the fire and with a wooden dipper fills a teacup with poison, warding off vapors with his sleeve. Nagura watches. (Nagura: Sawamura Gennosuke; Zangetsu: Ichikawa Yazo) Page 316

"You'll stop grumbling when you're dead! Here, help me, Nagura. Drink damn you!" Zangetsu throws Seigen to the floor and tries to force him to drink the poison. (Nagura: Sawamura Gennosuke; Zangetsu: Ichikawa

Yazo; Seigen: Morita Kanya) Page 317



Gonsuke and Sakura on the hanamichi at the conclusion of Act V. He flicks a straw mat over their shoulders and they pose. (*Gonsuke*: Bandô Mitsugorô; *Sakura*: Nakamura Jakumemon) Page 330

Seigen's ghost rises among the gravestones beside the hermitage. He clutches at and is partially hidden by trailing willow branches. (*Seigen*: Morita Kanyô) Page 330

[Because SAKURA has been raised at court, she does not understand vulgar language. She continues unperturbed.]

SAKURA: . . . contemplating his sweet memory, I wonder where he may be?

GONSUKE: The hell with him any way! We're young. We'll have more fun without him.

SAKURA [*shyly but eagerly leans against him*]: Though you left without a word, my heart has not wavered in devotion. You shall not leave this abandoned one again.

GONSUKE [*a bard laugh*]: Relax, Princess. Would I throw away a good thing? [*He casually puts his hand in her breast.*] In the old days, you had to be a noble's son, with a pretty mug, decked out in purple silk and wearing a warrior's two swords, to be lover to a princess. It's a twisted world now, isn't it, when a princess loves a gravedigger? Ha, ha, ha! Eh, Princess. I won't throw you out. And you won't leave me, eh?

[*He puts his hand more deeply into her bosom. She submits ecstatically, then rises and embraces him from behind, letting trailing kimono sleeves fall over his shoulders. She poses provocatively.*]

SAKURA: I shall never forsake you. I am alone in the world. You shall be this one's protector.

[GONSUKE leans back, hands clasped casually around one bare knee.]

GONSUKE: Don't worry, I'll take care of you. But you'll live as I do. I'm a beggar; I haven't a cent. You'll wear a cotton kimono, with a cheap sash wound around your gut, not like that. [*Nods at her expensive clothes.*] You'll get along without maids, servants, lacquered hair, and combs. You'll quit blacking your teeth, till they go white like the teeth of the rest of us dogs. You'll sleep with a dozen others in the room and get up at dawn. If you can't say "yes" to life in a pigsty, forget about living with me!

SAKURA [*sincerely, for she understands none of it*]: Having no experience of the heavenly things you describe, pray instruct me in what I should do.

[*She bows prettily. GONSUKE likes what he hears, but still considers her a liability.*]

GONSUKE: You won't do unless you're cheapened up. But I haven't time to teach you. I've got work to do. [*He thinks.*] Hmmm. I wonder? Could we farm you out some place for lessons in vulgarity?

SAKURA [*innocently*]: Would such instruction differ from composing song and poetry?

GONSUKE: Damned right it would. [*He poses.*] Now, who would take in someone like you? [*He slaps his thigh and chuckles.*] Of course. You can go to Kozukappara. Checking you into a whorehouse there should do the trick. I'll have a talk with that pimp Kanroku. [*Turns to SAKURA.*] Listen, Princess, I'm going out to fix you up with a job. While I'm gone, don't go away. Wait here, eh?

SAKURA [*obedient, yet unconsciously as to one of lower class*]: I shall do and go where you suggest. Yet, as I will be alone at night in this lonely hut and feeling trepidation, I ask that you return in haste.

[Fervently he presses her hand against his cheek. She is stunned by the truth of what he says. He embraces her from behind and they sink to the floor.]

Through previous lives . . . into endless time . . . Seigen's love for Shiragiku!

Princess, you are Shiragiku!

[He forces her to put an arm around him. He places a trembling hand on her breast. With mounting excitement, he rubs her breasts until she nearly faints in revulsion.]

Do not deny our ties of love . . . ordained by Karma. I adore you! I adore you!

[Panting with desire, he presses against her.]

SAKURA *[pleading]*: Pitiful Reverend Seigen, though you love me through generations, it is an illicit passion. I already have a husband. *[Bows politely.]* Set aside, good Seigen, your desires.

SEIGEN *[gathering his strength]*: Seigen will never abandon your love. Never. Our passion shall be consummated. Agonized life flickers to an end . . .

[He clutches his chest and grimaces in pain. The prayer bell is struck insistently. SAKURA shudders and turns away. He seizes the knife left on the floor by GONSUKE.]

If you were slain, heartless woman . . . and I . . . bliss would be ours together, sharing the same lotus leaf. Accept me now . . . or will you die . . . for . . . our . . . love?

[SAKURA turns. She sees the knife and gasps but, as if hypnotized, she seems unable to flee. He edges toward her.]

If our ties in this life are weak . . . marriage in the next will make them strong! Die for me!

SAKURA: I . . . I . . . I . . . !

SEIGEN: Or will you . . . love me now?

SAKURA: I . . . !

SEIGEN *[drawing out the word]*: Well . . . ?

SAKURA *[drawing out the word]*: Well . . . !

BOTH *[alternately, then simultaneously]*: Well, well, well . . . well!

SEIGEN *[harshly]*: Will you love me? Or shall I kill you, Princess?

[He is beside her. Gasping in agony, he brings the knife up to her throat. The hypnotic tie between them snaps. She breaks away; gently he attempts to murder her. Instrumental music alternates with song. Kaza Oto wind pattern of the large drum rises and falls; action sequences, punctuated by batan and battari tsuke beats, culminate in mie poses. The mood and tempo of fighting, though gradually rising to a climax, is deliberate throughout. Because the combat is expressed in formal patterns, the scene is at once terrifying and beautiful. SEIGEN slashes at her right and left, but his efforts are ineffectual. Moving quickly out of his reach, she avoids rather than opposes him. As a result, there is little physical contact. He manages to seize her arm but she slips free. He falls to the floor, off-balance. She runs to the altar where accordion-pleated surtas are stacked high. She

throws them one after another; he tries to fend them off with the knife, but they gradually entangle his arms. They pose in a mie to battari tsuke beats: she is near the altar, he stands right center in a sea of paper. The final surta is stretched in an arc between them.]

CHORUS *[sings slow Jazkyō, "Saint Jizo's Prayer"]*:

I touch my brow to your feet revered Saint Jizo,

Blessed Saint, Blessed Jizo,

[The fight continues at a slower pace. He clings to the beam of her kimono, rises, and holds the knife to her breast. She breaks away and retreats him to the floor by the pillar left. They fall apart. Tripping, she falls clings to the pillar leaning toward her, knife raised; she kneels facing him, he bent backward to avoid the blade. Twice he rushes at her and stumbles; she knife wedges between the floor mats. He steps on the train of her kimono. She pulls free and he tumbles down the steps. They pose in a mie to battari tsuke beats: he lies on his back brandishing the knife, the kneeling on the steps above him, hands clasped pleadingly. The CHORUS ends Shamisen play faster Kasai, "Edo Melody." They rise. She avoids several dangerously close lunges. In desperation, she wrests the knife from him. He crawls along the ground toward her, lifting his hands in supplication.]

SEIGEN: Kill me . . . please!

SAKURA: No. Please, Reverend Seigen. Stop.

SEIGEN: Then kill yourself!

[He tries to embrace her. She does not want to use the knife against SEIGEN, so she throws it over his head and it falls into the grave. She sighs with relief and does not fend off his embrace. Fervently he clutches at her breast. She shudders and pushes him away. He plunges head first into the grave. Silence. Drum and tsuke swell. SEIGEN rises in the grave. He has fallen onto the upturned blade and it is embedded in his throat. Blood from the wound streams onto his chest.]

SAKURA *[kindly]*: Are you all right? Reverend Seigen?

SEIGEN: You . . . have . . . killed . . . me. Shameless . . . woman . . .

[She turns and sees him. She clasps her hands and prays almost inaudibly.]

SAKURA: Reverend Seigen, absolve this one of your death. I pray.

[He shakes his head, unable to speak. On the verge of death, he nevertheless staggers from the grave in one final attempt to embrace SAKURA. She avoids him. He collides with the veranda pillar and the knife is driven deep into his throat. Batan tsuke beats. The prayer bell is struck repeatedly. SEIGEN clings to drooping willow branches for support. Convulsions wrack his body and he dies, falling among the gravestones. Lights come up on the bananichi. Kaza Oto wind pattern. Shamisen play loud and lively Hayame. GONSUKE runs on to fast bata-bata tsuke beats. He comes up behind SAKURA, lying buddai center. Music stops.]

GONSUKE *[casually]*: I'm back.

[SAKURA lets out a terrified scream. He leaps back, startled.]

For God's sake, don't surprise me like that! What's the matter?

[She throws herself at his feet, sobbing.]

SAKURA: The recent thunderbolts frightened me.

SAKURA [scolding]: Hah! You highborn ones are babies. Who's going to buy you if you're a coward? Listen, it's all set. They need a woman at the Four-Six House in Kozukappara.

SAKURA [still in shock, she bows politely]: It is my wish that you decide. Your judgment will be acceptable.

GONSUKE: Your wish is it? I'm your husband, you'll do as I say. You're going to a whorehouse and you're going to work. Understand? [Blithely.] Learn the lingo and pick up a common touch. You are one hell of a sight in that outfit. But then, flashy goods sell! Ha, ha! Come on, Princess, we'll check you in.

[Kaza Oto wind pattern. GONSUKE is in high spirits. Flicking a straw mat from a hook in the entry, he throws it over their shoulders. He leads her through the gate and onto the hanamichi. SAKURA trembles violently. The flute plays eerie Netoribue, "Ghostly Flute," and the large drum Doro-doro, "Drum Roll," indicating the appearance of a spirit. SEIGEN's ghost stands among the gravestones, half hidden by willow branches. He beckons to SAKURA with both limp arms. A pale green ball of fire—the spirit or "soul fire" of SEIGEN—bobs in the air over the priest's head. At seven-three SAKURA stands rooted, then she is pulled back as if on strings. Tsuke and drum crescendo. She collapses. GONSUKE kneels beside her, unaware of either the apparition or the soul fire.]

GONSUKE: What is it?

[SAKURA looks from SEIGEN to GONSUKE. The left side of GONSUKE's face is disfigured with the same blue blotch as SEIGEN's. She gasps.]

SAKURA [weakly]: Your face . . . like Seigen!

GONSUKE [barks]: It's me!

SAKURA [gazing back and forth between them]: Truly, you are . . .

GONSUKE [proudly]: . . . I am Gonsuke, girl!

[He flicks the straw mat around the two of them. The soul fire moves from SEIGEN across the stage. It floats in the air over their heads, rising and falling at the end of a long pole, manipulated by a black-robed STAGE ASSISTANT. SAKURA sees the soul fire. She knows that SEIGEN's vengeful spirit is now tied to her and that in death SEIGEN has willed his disfigurement on his rival GONSUKE. She ruefully accepts the fact that hereafter she will have no control over her life.]

SAKURA [sardonically]: Since I'm to be poisoned . . .

GONSUKE: What?

SAKURA: . . . I assure you, I'll drink the cup down.

GONSUKE [not understanding]: No need, Girl, I'll take care of you! [A single ki clack. They pose. Accelerating ki clacks accompany the closing of the curtain behind them. Shamisen play Yari Sabi, "Rusted Spear," stick drum and flute Tanuki Bayashi, "Badger Rhythm," and large drum Doro-doro. The soul fire bobs overhead. GONSUKE struts

proudly. SAKURA moves with new strength down the hanamichi. They go out of sight. Drums and flute play lively Shagiri between acts.]

akumakume

ACT VI

SCENE I A STREET IN YAMANOSHUKU VILLAGE

[Two sharp clacks of the ki: the act begins. The curtain is run open to the sounds of a time bell and a wailing child. The scene is a side street in a mountain village: a police box is right, fire buckets are piled up left by an open well, and a black curtain behind the scene indicates that it is night. KINBEI, RIHEI, MOKUBEI, and YUMEIZAEMON enter carrying lanterns. They are village officials on their nightly rounds. SANTA, the night watchman, enters crying, "watch for fire," and banging his metal pole on the ground. The baby wails loudly. Everyone stops, amazed to hear a child in the street. SANTA follows the sound to an old baker, half hidden in a rubbish pile by the fence. He brings the baker to KINBEI.]

KINBEI [flustered, refuses the baker]: Why is it such things happen when I'm responsible?

RIHEI: That's true. Put Kinbei on night watch and there's bound to be trouble. YUMEIZAEMON: It may be an abandoned child, but it gets cold all the same. We can't leave it here. Should we put it in the police box?

MOKUBEI: What if a stray dog comes along and makes a meal of it? Where would we be then?

KINBEI [looking for a way out]: First we should know when the child was abandoned.

SANTA [thinks]: It wasn't there when I made rounds at two, and it's just three now.

KINBEI [sighs]: Then it was during my watch.

RIHEI: Should we get someone to take it in?

MOKUBEI [searches for money in the baker, finding none]: You have to pay foster parents and there's nothing here.

KINBEI: This is going to cost the village money.

YUMEIZAEMON: By the way, I don't see Gonsuke. He's on duty, too.

SANTA: He said he'd be here soon.

YUMEIZAEMON: He's the biggest cheat I know. His face is horrible. So's his disposition.

RIHEI [nodding]: He's a dreadful person with a disgusting face.

MOKUBEI: He makes me ill.

KINBEI [frowning]: We won't settle this business if he hears you've slandered him behind his back. Would you say this to Gonsuke's face?

ALL: No, no. Not me.

KINBEI: You aren't men at all. Look at you, all you can do is talk.

[The child cries. They look into the basket. The time bell tolls. GONSUKE buries on from the right. He carries a lantern. His face is still disfigured.]

but he is now dressed, like the other men, in conservative townsman's dark kimono and cloak. GONSUKE has used his possession of the Iwabuchi temple and house to establish himself as a reputable householder in the village. As a landowner he is also a ward official. He wears his new respectability lightly.]

GONSUKE [heartily]: Councilmen of the ward, you've been waiting. Lots of business kept me. [Sees the basket.] What's this? An abandoned brat?

KINBEI: It's an abandoned boy, about two years old. We're discussing what to do with it.

RIHEI: It's got to have milk.

GONSUKE [shrewdly]: That's right, you need a woman to nurse the kid.

What kind of heartless person would raise the thing for two years, then throw it out? [Makes a show of deep concern.] You know, Kinbei, it'll cost the ward hard cash to get someone to take the kid off your hands. KINBEI [officially]: The ward will have to pay two gold ryō, even three. We know that very well. Don't we councilmen?

[Others nod in agreement.]

GONSUKE [briskly]: Well then, I know how to settle this in a flash. I haven't got a son and if three ryō go with the kid, I'll take him in. The cash will pay off some of the cost of raising him, and I'll gain a son. Well, do I take the brat?

KINBEI: This is sudden. Hm. It would relieve the ward of responsibility, and surely the village elders will approve. [He decides.] The boy is yours. Do you agree, councilmen?

RIHEI: The sooner it's settled the better.

YUMEIZAEEMON: We can collect three ryō quick enough.

GONSUKE [slyly]: But you'll have to feed him yourself at least until tomorrow.

KINBEI [protesting]: I know three ryō isn't much, Gonsuke. Still you should take him now.

GONSUKE: I don't have to pick a brat out of the street to have a son, you know. I can marry. I can have my own. [Looks at them coolly.] Three ryō is on the cheap side, don't you think? Add another half. [All react with surprise.]

KINBEI: Three and a half ryō?

GONSUKE: That's right.

KINBEI [temporizing]: We will think about it, Gonsuke.

[GONSUKE flicks his arm in his kimono sleeve and poses, looking hard at KINBEI.]

GONSUKE: The abandoned brat will come with three and one half gold pieces, or not at all!

KINBEI [resigned]: Very well, three and a half then.

GONSUKE: Fine. Now that we're agreed, seal the bargain. [They clap in unison ten times, indicating agreement. Everyone is relieved to have an awkward situation resolved. They bow and congratulate each other. KINBEI takes the basket from SANTA.]

KINBEI: Now then, Gonsuke, this is what I'll do. I'll take the boy now, my wife will nurse him, and later in the morning we'll bring the child and the money to your place.

[They all bow to GONSUKE and add his goodbyes. Samurais play Mokugyo as they go off with the baby. Alone, GONSUKE pines, highly satisfied. The time bell tolls.]

GONSUKE: Three ryō won't go far. My real treasure is the House of Yoshida scroll that hangs like Buddha's talisman around my neck. [He pushes the scroll out the front of his kimono and gazes at it in silence a palanquin appears on the bananichi. GONSUKE quickly puts the scroll back inside his kimono. A young SAMURAI leads the palanquin onto the main stage, pays the bearers, and waves them away. He approaches GONSUKE.]

SAMURAI [politely]: Excuse me, good Sir.

GONSUKE [warily]: What do you want?

SAMURAI: Does a householder named Gonsuke live in the neighborhood?

GONSUKE: I'm the landowner Gonsuke. Who wants to know?

SAMURAI: That person is you? Come.

[He leads the way to the palanquin. The curtain is flicked open and AKUGORŌ steps out. He and GONSUKE measure each other with their glance and pose.]

AKUGORŌ [regally]: I shall be some while. You may retire. SAMURAI: As my Lord wishes.

[SAMURAI bows and goes off right. GONSUKE fidgets casual difference but he watches AKUGORŌ carefully every moment.]

GONSUKE: So, you've come to call on Gonsuke? You, who at Kyōmizu . . . AKUGORŌ [pompously]: . . . entrusted to your hand a letter to no avail. In secret I have come tonight for one purpose and that alone: to complete the undertaking of which we spoke before. I am here to take possession of the Yoshida scroll.

GONSUKE: Ah, is that so? You've come for the Yoshida scroll? Which . . . I have.

AKUGORŌ: Exactly so.

GONSUKE [indifferently]: It's here and I've no use for it. [Takes it out.] I'll be glad to be rid of it. It weighs me down. But, I was promised by Matsui Gengo . . .

AKUGORŌ [grandly]: I know what was pledged. Is that the scroll?

GONSUKE: It is.

[AKUGORŌ extends his hand in a grandiose gesture. Casually GONSUKE passes the scroll to AKUGORŌ, who quickly opens it and scans it.]

AKUGORŌ: Beyond doubt it is the Yoshida scroll! I acknowledge its receipt.

You have done well. Much will come your way.

[AKUGORŌ turns to go. GONSUKE strikes a brash pose.]

GONSUKE: Lord Akugorō! When you begged me to steal the Miyakobori you said I'd be rewarded. But you forget what I asked for: two thousand ryō. I'll take the money now, if you don't mind.

AKUGORŌ (*frostily*): Indeed? We shall undertake to convey your just reward in due time. And now, without further discussion, we shall retire for the evening.

GONSUKE: Oh, no! Keep your promise. I risked my life. I killed two men for the scroll. You can say it's a lot of money, but isn't ruling the House of Yoshida worth two thousand ryō? If you think so, pay me now. If not . . . give back the scroll.

AKUGORŌ [*with thinly disguised hatred*]: What? Is your petty tradesman's heart quaking that you may lose some gold coins, Gonsuke? Do you question my honor? Iruka Akugorō is not so contemptible. [*Darkly*] In proper time you will receive your due.

GONSUKE: You say later. I say now is the time. The place is here. [*Poses.*] The money, great Lord Akugorō!

AKUGORŌ: Unreasonable treasonable rogue, I do not carry . . .

GONSUKE [*cutting him off*]: If you haven't got cash, go get it! Hand it over . . . or else the scroll!

[GONSUKE reaches for the scroll. Suddenly AKUGORŌ draws and slashes. GONSUKE leaps aside and defends himself. They cross swords and pose in a mie to loud battari tsuke beats.]

AKUGORŌ [*smiling with fury*]: Wretch! Madman!

GONSUKE [*laughs harshly*]: You're the mad one, not me!

AKUGORŌ: Insolent! You are my enemy, Gonsuke!

[*Batan and battari beats alternate. Shamisen play Ishidan, "Stone Steps." AKUGORŌ strikes ponderously. GONSUKE parries several times, then agilely slips under AKUGORŌ's blade and strikes the sword from his hand. He slashes his opponent from chest to thigh. AKUGORŌ clings to GONSUKE. GONSUKE places the scroll between his teeth to free his hands and with a powerful, two-handed upward thrust into the body, kills AKUGORŌ. GONSUKE poses in a mie, sword held out at arm's length. He puts the sword away and notices the well.*]

GONSUKE [*laughs*]: A corpse and a well! Ha, ha!

[*He turns to kick the corpse into the well. Nearby a rooster crows loudly. GONSUKE starts, then poses.*]

Even dawn startles . . . the murderer.

[*The time bell tolls four in the morning. A rooster crows. Shamisen play Yosutake Bushi, "Four Bamboos." As the stage revolves, GONSUKE kicks AKUGORŌ into the well and the scene of GONSUKE's lodgings comes into view. Action continues without a break.*]

SCENE 2 GONSUKE'S HOUSE IN YAMANOSHUKU

[*As the revolving stage stops, the faint sounds of Yatai Bayashi, "Street Stall Melody," the lively music for the Three Shrines Festival, can be heard from offstage shamisen and drums. The scene is the main room of GONSUKE's house in Yamanoshuku, modestly furnished but obviously the home of a substantial person. A curtain center leads to rooms inside.*]

Paper sliding doors indicate a small room left. Entry to the street is by a wooden sliding door right. TSUNAEMON, a moneylender, enters from the right, remonstrating with OJŪ and her husband SENTARŌ, who is really the Yoshida retainer, SHICHIRO incognito. TSUNAEMON is sleek, and dressed in unobtrusive but expensive dark wool kimono and well-fed, and dressed in unobtrusive but expensive dark wool kimono and a cloak. SENTARŌ wears a commoner's cheap cotton kimono and white checks. The moneylender is sputtering and fuming. Music fades.]

TSUNAEMON: No, no, Sentarō. I don't care if it still is dark. Take me straight to his house!

OJŪ [*trying to placate him*]: Please forgive him, Sir.

SENTARŌ: Let him complain to the landlord. Who cares? He can yell to the village head if he wants to.

OJŪ: Shh! People can hear. We should keep this to ourselves.

SENTARŌ: What difference does it make? I don't care who hears.

[TSUNAEMON beats on the door.]

TSUNAEMON [*turning to him*]: You talk outrageously. I'll see you pay for this, Sentarō. You were lent ten gold pieces for three days. Why didn't you send your wife when the three days were up? Since you didn't, your landlord's going to hear about it.

SENTARŌ: Don't bother. I'll see him, to report you.

TSUNAEMON [*sputtering*]: Unprincipled wretch!

[TSUNAEMON pounds on the door.]

OJŪ [*trying to distract him*]: I don't blame you for being angry with such a man. Why, he will do anything to earn a bit of cash. Listen, he's gone as far as selling the child we took in to raise. ²² He drives me to distraction. It's natural for you to be angry, but, please, won't you . . .

TSUNAEMON: . . . pardon your husband? Certainly not. [*Stops and looks closely at her.*] Did he really, as you say, sell a baby?

OJŪ [*feigning tears*]: Oh, he did, Sir!

TSUNAEMON: You're a disgusting fellow.

SENTARŌ [*not intimidated*]: Why disgusting? Because I gave a baby? It's an old country custom.

TSUNAEMON [*he pounds and still no one comes*]: He isn't home. Why did you bring me when he's not here? [*Pounds again*] Landlord! Open up!

SENTARŌ [*caustically*]: He puts a lock on the outside of the door to impress people. He's inside. [*Shouts*] Open up in there!

TSUNAEMON: Wake up, landlord! Wake up! This is a mockery! [*Shamisen play Yatai Bayashi. GONSUKE swaggers on from the right. Without a word, he seizes TSUNAEMON and throws him to the ground. Batan tsuke beats.*]

GONSUKE: Who the hell are you? I come home to find a merry bastard caterwauling in front of the door.

[*He takes a key from his kimono and opens the door.*]

²². It is unclear why Shichirō, a samurai retainer of the Yoshida clan, would sell his mistress' child. But the action is in keeping with his assumed role of a well-to-do and impulsive Edo gambler.

Sentarō. Is this fellow from your place?

SENTARŌ: Yes, Landlord Gonsuke. *[They enter. GONSUKE sits stage left in the place of honor. He crosses his legs and nonchalantly settles down for a smoke as if the others weren't there. TSUNAEMON dusts himself off and kneels right. Fuming, he tries to regain his dignity. OJŪ and SENTARŌ close the door, then sit unobtrusively behind TSUNAEMON. Music stops.]*

TSUNAEMON: See here. Are you the landlord, the master here?

[GONSUKE doesn't reply. TSUNAEMON looks uncomfortable.]
I am Tsunaemon, moneylender of the Ōgyō firm. What gives you the right to seize me by the neck as if I were a . . . a day-old kitten? Landlord, you're an illiterate, unreasonable know-it-all.

GONSUKE *[lightly sarcastic]*: Like you say, I'm not educated. You said something else, too. You said my house is a mortuary. But that can't be. I'm here and I'm alive. Explain it, since you're the smart one.

[TSUNAEMON realizes he cannot win this argument. He becomes conciliatory.]

TSUNAEMON: Landlord, I was wrong to have said it. But it's your responsibility to control a tenant's actions. *[Officiously.]* I would like you to guarantee in writing the debts of your tenant Sentarō.

GONSUKE *[stouping]*: Do what?

SENTARŌ: Please, Master, let me tell the whole story. This is the honest truth. As you know, the Three Shrines Festival is coming up and no one wants to be a piker then, so I borrowed ten ryō from this fellow for the celebration. I had to have the money but he wouldn't give it before I signed a contract pledging my wife if it wasn't repaid in three days. Well, the three days are up now and he says he wants Ojū, or he'll take it up with you, Master.

GONSUKE: He's trying to get his collateral, is he? Ha! Forget it, fellow.

TSUNAEMON *[exploding]*: Forget it? I won't! A landlord's responsible for his people's debts. You can't leave it like this. No Sir, I'm not satisfied.

Either guarantee his debt or I'm going to the village council!

GONSUKE *[grandiloquently]*: Shut your mouth, blowhard! I'm no fat cat that spills out his guts because a shyster like you makes a noise. Virtue I never knew, but I've plenty of training in vices. *[Strikes a bravado pose.]* I'm Tsurigane Gonsuke. With a bit of cash I bought a landowner's rights.²³ Of my boarders, no one wins the prize for filial piety. I haven't been here long, but when they're in trouble they run to me, 'til, hell, my front yard looks like a prison gate! I welcome to my property the pick of the crop of thugs and thieves, and the man who'll put a rope around his parent's neck gets his room rent free!

23. The power of money had become increasingly important by the Kasei era. In spite of Shōgunate regulations merchants could buy social position that infringed on the prerogatives of the samurai class. Even a rogue like Gonsuke is able, with a small amount of money, to buy land and with it respectability and a place on the ward council.

OJŪ *[hopefully]*: Do you hear that, Husband?

SENTARŌ *[bows to GONSUKE]*: You, Sir, are an understanding master.

TSUNAEMON: Heavens. He's a liaratic. *[Changing his tactics.]* Sir, you paid good money for your property. You can understand how it is with me. He agreed to pledge his wife as security and . . .

GONSUKE *[grinning wickedly]*: You don't get her. It's damned well sorry asking a wife as collateral on a three-day loan. *[Leans in confidentially.]* Would you like me to tell that to the council? I will, if you don't get the hell out of here. Clear out, before I bath in your head!

[GONSUKE threatens TSUNAEMON with the tobacco tray. TSUNAEMON crawls to the edge of the room and picks up his sandals.]

TSUNAEMON *[uneasily]*: You're an excitable man, Landlord. Ahem. Isn't he, Sentarō?

SENTARŌ *[curtly]*: On your way if you're finished.

TSUNAEMON: I'm going. *[Crosses to the door.]* I'm going, but this is too absurd for words.

GONSUKE *[ominously]*: Then leave without any Go, silent as death.

TSUNAEMON *[cowed and mortified]*: I'm going. I'm going, silent . . . as death.

[Shamisen, drums and bells play Take no Naritaya, "I Want to Become a Bamboo," and Shoden Bayashi, "Sacred Melody." TSUNAEMON, holding his sandals in his hand, tiptoes through the door and off right, thoroughly defeated. SENTARŌ faces GONSUKE bumbly. Music stops.]

SENTARŌ: With just a few words you settled it. Wife, offer thanks.

OJŪ *[bowing]*: Your firmness showed him to be a man of mean spirit, Master. *[Shamisen play Yatai Bayashi. KINBEI, his wife carrying the baby, and the other councilmen enter from the right. They come directly to the door and open it. Music softens. They address greetings.]*

GONSUKE *[casually but politely]*: Kinbei, come in, come in.

[They remain standing in the entry, anxious to be finished.]

KINBEI: Thank you, but we meet with the elders soon. We've collected from the ward. Please receive three and a half ryō and the child.

[KINBEI pushes a stack of paper-wrapped coins toward GONSUKE. GONSUKE books them with his pipe, befs their weight, and smiles as he slips them inside his kimono. KINBEI's wife passes him the baby. He resumes and GONSUKE dumps it unceremoniously in OJŪ's lap. He resumes smoking.]

Our agreement is concluded. We are grateful, Gonsuke. It's still early, we'll leave so you can rest.

GONSUKE *[lightly]*: I'll watch over the kid. And thanks for the money. *[Music resumes. The visitors bow and hurry off, obviously relieved. OJŪ uncovers the baby's face. The baby cries. She and SENTARŌ recognize the child as SAKURA's. Music fades.]*

OJŪ *[involuntarily]*: Ahh!

GONSUKE: He isn't your kid, but he's hungry, since you're here, why don't you give him your breast?

[GONSUKE sits smoking. OJŪ and SENTARŌ exchange glances. They rise and quietly slip to the door with the child.]

SENTARŌ: We will let you rest, Master.

[They ease the door open and are about to leave. Without warning

GONSUKE leaps up and blocks their way. He looks at them haughtily and poses.]

GONSUKE: Sentarō, stay where you are! You, Woman, give the brat his lunch!

OJŪ: Then you know the child is . . . ?

SENTARŌ: Quiet! Do not tell . . .

GONSUKE [he slams the door closed]: Nothing goes on here Gonsuke doesn't know!

yusurba

shichigocho

[Shamisen play Kawaigaruta. "Once Loved." The two sit dejectedly.

GONSUKE swaggers back and sits. He poses with his legs crossed, holding a pipe in his right hand. He speaks grandiloquently, relishing the power he holds over them.]

The kid means nothing to me still! I took him in; for even three gold pieces are better than none. I knew who had the child, who abandoned him; lodger in my tenement, Sentarō, if a rope around your neck is a frightening thought, hand over to your landlord twenty ryō of gold; pick up the little bastard and clear the hell out!

[OJŪ and SENTARŌ are amazed.]

SENTARŌ: You mean you took the wait in knowing all the while; your

purpose was extorting from me twenty ryō?

OJŪ: Twenty ryō of gold you say? He must pay it now?

GONSUKE: You have that much haven't you?

SENTARŌ: I have twenty ryō?

GONSUKE [posing grandly]: In your wife Ojū you have!

OJŪ and SENTARŌ [pose]: Eh??

GONSUKE: If I keep the damned brat here someone's got to nurse him; I've a

tenant luckily whose wife is giving milk; as security she stays to suckle the kid, until Sentarō returns to pay up twenty ryō! [Grins at SENTARŌ.] Does the cunning of your landlord impress you, Sentarō?

SENTARŌ [impressed in spite of himself]: To use an abandoned child to earn twenty ryō . . .

GONSUKE [front]: . . . is one hell of a good plan, don't you think it is?

OJŪ: Then it's settled: I'll remain in lieu of ransom . . .

GONSUKE [his turn to be surprised]: You'll hock yourself for him?

OJŪ: If not my husband . . .

SENTARŌ: If I'm arrested . . .

[Both think of SENTARŌ's duty to find the Yoshida scroll.]

GONSUKE: You'll leave her with me?

SENTARŌ [obliquely giving permission]: Indeed, Sentarō, you must . . .

GONSUKE [roars with laughter]: . . . from this instant surely I . . .

Ha, ha, ha!

[They pose.]

CHORUS [sings Take ni Naritaya, and drums and bell play Shoden Bayashi]:

Let me become a bamboo, straight growing and tall
[During the song SENTARŌ, boiling with resentment, jerks up the beam of his kimono and rubs through the door. He slams it closed and runs onto the bananimitchi. In his haste he almost knocks down KANROKU, leading a palanquin carried by two BEARERS. SENTARŌ rubs past them and out of sight. KANROKU knocks at GONSUKE's door.]

GONSUKE: Gonsuke, are you there?

GONSUKE: It must be Kanroku. Come in.

KANROKU [pops his head in]: Ah, you're here. Good, good.

Wait there.

[BEARERS bow and squat beside the palanquin. KANROKU enters and crosses to GONSUKE, who remains sitting. The baby cries. KANROKU looks at OJŪ in amazement.]

What's this, Gonsuke? Have you taken a wife with a child?

GONSUKE: Don't talk like a fool. Hard cash went with the abandoned kid, so I took him in. She's a tenant's wife.

KANROKU: You are a strange one. You've got a wife but you send her out as a prostitute. Then you pick up a kid without mother or father and bring in a woman to feed it.

GONSUKE: Easy come easy go. When it's time, I'll call 'em out.

KANROKU: You're the hardest man I ever met, Gonsuke. But, listen, there's something we have to talk about. I brought your wife back. She's no good at Kozukappara any more.

GONSUKE [uninterested, lights a pipe]: Hmmm.

KANROKU: Listen to this.

[He settles down to tell his story. Shamisen play Take ni Naritaya in the background.]

I set her up in a place of her own, because one look at her and you knew she was a nice piece of goods. From the beginning she was the talk of the quarter. Customers fought to try out the new "Scarlet Princess of Kozukappara." Then the word got around that she talked and acted like the daughter of a court noble. It made men blush. Scared them speechless. The wife worked hard to get rid of her stuck-up ways. With the man's tattoo on her arm, we called her the "Cherry Bell Princess." Soon customers lined up to get in. We passed out numbers like a butcher shop.

GONSUKE: Hell, if she's got customers, why bring her back?

KANROKU [confidentially]: Someone, I don't know who, began whispering about town, "a ghost comes out when the whore lays down." I had to move her. We went to another part of the quarter. Gonsuke, guess what happened? The ghost followed right along. Everywhere I took her, the ghost was there, too.

GONSUKE: You mean a ghost is tailing the princess?

KANROKU [nods vigorously]: That's right.

GONSUKE [gloomily]: If your story's true, it may be the ghost that ruined my face.

KANROKU: Oh? I knew your face wasn't always like that. I thought you had an accident.

GONSUKE [laughs off his premonition]: You've told a weird story, Kanroku. Anyway, I don't care how good-looking she is, who wants her with a ghost tagging along? Not me.

[He turns away to smoke. KANROKU is not put off so easily.]

KANROKU: I've brought her home. There's no other place for her. [Calls off.] Send her in. Then go off and have a drink.

FIRST BEARER: Yes, Sir. We'll be across the street.

[The men lift the side flap of the palanquin and trot off right. Shamisen play Inshu. "Master of the House." SAKURA rises indolently from the palanquin. She is markedly changed. She wears a thin, erotically draped kimono, its garish pattern of the type affected by cheap prostitutes. A cloak falls provocatively off one shoulder. Her hair is deranged. She saunters carelessly into the room. OJŪ is thunderstruck to see her husband's mistress, but she hides her reaction.]

GONSUKE: So. You've been around and now you're back. Did the pimps get their money's worth, Princess?

[He laughs. SAKURA poses indolently. Her speech unconsciously alternates between the vulgar idiom of a barlot and her old, elegant court speech. The effect is humorously incongruous.]

SAKURA: You don't have to worry, I made out all right. What's good enough for a trick ought to be good enough for . . . you, oh, most cherished husband. So what if I moved around?

[She sees OJŪ and the baby. OJŪ is unknown to her, and she does not recognize the baby. She crosses spitefully to GONSUKE and hooks the tobacco box away from him. She strikes it repeatedly with her pipe to get his attention.]

Hey, where'd you pick up the broad? You presume upon my good nature should you imagine I would tolerate . . . this old bag stacked up here.

In this Land of the Rising Sun, sufficient space does not exist to encompass two of us . . . let alone a puking brat. If she wishes, let her suckle, let her rear the child . . . out of my god-damned sight. I find the infant offends my sensibilities. So, Gonsuke, let's knock it off!

[She hikes one knee up under her chin in an undignified pose and smokes.

GONSUKE, vastly amused, does not bother to glance her way.]

GONSUKE: Hey, Kanroku, she learned a few things since she went with you.

Still, some of the princess shows through. Ha, ha!

KANROKU: Birth tells. Rub a tarnished gold piece and it shines.

SAKURA: What do you guys know? From break of dawn through the night

. . . ah, drop it, who cares.

GONSUKE [good-naturedly]: I see, I see. She's chopped down the middle: half princess, half bitch.

[The men laugh.]

SAKURA: Where'd you snatch the snout-nosed kid? If you desire to bring a son

to manhood, did I not give birth? For God's sake, Gonsuke, at least you could raise your own bastard.

[Stretching out, she leans indolently on one elbow.]

GONSUKE: Don't be stupid. He brings in money.

KANROKU [rubbing his hands together]: How true, my Friend, say what you like, money comes first. Gonsuke, your wife is back, but the seal that's

fixed to her contract is mine. At Kozukappara they thought she'd work out, so you were paid twenty ryō in cash. Now they call me a liar and want their money back. I don't have it, you do. Return the twenty ryō, Gonsuke.

GONSUKE [lightly]: You're a born fool. Since you've come this far with the

wife, leave her, Kanroku. But hell, I haven't any money, not a coin.

KANROKU [mournfully]: Then there's nothing else to do but take the princess back. I suppose they'll turn her into a streetwalker, a "pearl of the night." I suppose they'll beat me. It's in their hands.

[He rises abruptly and takes her hand.]

Well, Princess, back to the whorehouse you go.

SAKURA: Do you propose to return me to that place once again? [Pulls her

band loose.] Cut it out. Indeed, rudely to seize my hand reveals your lack of breeding. [She slaps her pipe on the floor and poses.] Damned disgusting pimp!

KANROKU: Talk all you want, the money's got to be scuttled.

GONSUKE [briskly]: All right, Kanroku, I'll scuttle.

KANROKU: But, you're broke you said.

GONSUKE: You'll be satisfied. Just listen.

[He beckons KANROKU over and whispers in his ear. KANROKU brightens.]

KANROKU: In her place?

GONSUKE [grinning]: Is it a good idea?

KANROKU: It's a great one!

GONSUKE [casually to OJŪ]: Hey, Missus. You go with this fellow to

Kozukappara and stand in at the whorehouse for a while.

OJŪ [dumbfounded]: What? Work in Kozukappara, in place of . . . your wife?

GONSUKE [heartily]: It won't be long. Sentarō can pick you up later, when he pays me twenty ryō. You do it for a while, Missus, all right?

OJŪ [pretending aloofness]: Though your strange wife's affairs are no concern of mine, I will go as her substitute out of consideration for my husband's honor.

[She bows, secretly pleased that she can help the princess.]

GONSUKE [impressed]: Lady, you're a regular son of Edo.

OJŪ: Spare your flattery. I will go, but my husband . . .

GONSUKE [expansively]: . . . will have everything explained.

OJŪ: I leave the child in your care.

24. Impulsiveness and generosity are typical of the Edoites or native-born Edoites.

IOJŪ places the child on the floor. KANROKU ushers her into the palanquin. In silence she looks back at SAKURA and poses. The BEARERS carry her swiftly onto the bananichi, followed by KANROKU.]

CHORUS [sings Giri to Nasake, "Duty and Compassion" to slow shamisen accompaniment]:

Duty and human compassion,
Struggle within one heart.

[SENTARŌ rushes onto the bananichi, halting the palanquin at seven-
thirty. OJŪ looks warningly at him.]

SENTARŌ [elliptically, trying to find out what has happened]: Ojū, faithful
to Yoshida...

OJŪ: ... Sentarō, my husband ...
SENTARŌ: ... do you take the place ... ?

OJŪ: ... of our master's princess.

[SENTARŌ understands, though the words mean nothing to KANROKU,
who is amazed that OJŪ's husband does not object.]

KANROKU: You agree?

[SENTARŌ nods with resolution. He hands OJŪ a letter of divorce,
which he has just had prepared, that releases him to continue looking for
the Miyakodori scroll.]

SENTARŌ: Here. It is a letter of divorce.

OJŪ [bows gratefully]: I am pleased.

SENTARŌ: This severs our relations.²⁵

OJŪ [reading]: "To Lady Ojū, from Awazu no Shichirō." I understand.

KANROKU: Bearers, on your way!

[The BEARERS carry the palanquin off, followed by KANROKU.]

CHORUS [repeats Giri to Nasake]:

Duty and human compassion,
Struggle within one heart.

[SENTARŌ moves stealthily up to the door, listens a moment, then moves
into the bushes at the rear of the house.]

GONSUKE: Well, wife, it's been a hell of a long time. Why don't I get out the
bedding, eh?

[He goes into the small room left and brings out folded bedding which he
drops beside SAKURA.]

SAKURA: God, not again! How blessed to contemplate one night alone, in
which my pillow is not a hated enemy.

[GONSUKE puts the baby at the foot of the bedding under a blanket.]

GONSUKE: Don't let the kid bother you. He'll have to sleep down there.

SAKURA: That's lousy. [Kicks the covers off the baby with her foot.]

Scrawny runt. The child is detestable.

GONSUKE [stretching out]: Quit complaining. I'm sick of it. Hey, wife, is it
like he said? Does a ghost pop out when you lie down?

25. He legally releases her from their marriage so she will not share in any punish-
ment he might incur in continuing to protect Matsuwaka and search for the
Miyakodori.

Ichigocho

SAKURA [lies down, bored]: Do not speak of ghosts, I pray.

GONSUKE: Praying won't keep them away! Ha, ha! I know what will though.

[He gets a short sword from the closet upstairs and shows it to SAKURA.]
It doesn't look like much but it's a prize blade. If your ghost comes out,
don't be bashful. Run him through.

SAKURA [leaning indolently on one elbow]: Is the blade, I pray, considered
valuable?

[He tucks the sword under the pillow and sits cross-legged beside her.]

GONSUKE: It is. It's rusty now but in its time it's earned up lots of men.
[The baby cries. He carelessly shoos it with his foot.]

Hey. Shut up, you.

[Shamisen play Giri to Nasake as SANTA enters from the right. He knocks
on the door, then peeks in, holding the lantern before him. He sees

GONSUKE and bows. Music softens.]

SANTA: Excuse me Sir, the council is meeting. They're asking for you. I was
sent ...

GONSUKE: Tell them I wasn't home.

SANTA: They are meeting about the money. [GONSUKE looks up.] And
they're drinking.

GONSUKE [rises]: There's always something when you're a landowner. You
wait, wife, right here.

SAKURA: Don't worry. I'll be asleep. Alone.

[Music becomes louder. GONSUKE gets a cloak from the closet and puts
it on. Holding the lantern before him, SANTA leads GONSUKE off right.]

SAKURA rises and watches them go. The music stops. The time bell
rings.]

SAKURA: He went off without lighting a lamp. Where does he keep one? Ah,
it's a bore.

[The time bell tolls. Soft, ominous Kaza Oto wind pattern begins. Shamisen
play Mameyori, "Beautiful Eyes." She yawns and stretches. She searches
for a lamp. From the small room left we hear the sound of steel and feet.
A glow brightens the paper doors. SAKURA re-enters with a lit lamp
which she places on the floor beside the bedding.]

Oh, to sleep one night alone. Long ago only the sither sounded in the
early evening. For a gloomy place like this though, we should hear bright
theater music, not the zither.

[She sits and pushes the child to one side with her foot.]

Hey, Kid, I need a nap. Move over.

[She stretches out luxuriously. After a moment the baby wails. Weary,
she rolls over and gets the baby.]

Hey, don't cry on me. Kid. Now, now. Don't cry. She looks at the baby.
[The child is quiet. Shamisen and drum are silent. She waves off GONSUKE.]

The irony of the situation strikes her. She poses, on the verge of tears. She
Ah, to think that I too in this same way once created my child. What
of the House of Yoshida and now abandoned like in (over and over)

sound, wretched and alone, my own beloved baby

[She forces thoughts of the past from her mind.]

A squalling kid reminds me of bawling short-timers. God, what paradise to rest a night before going back to work!

[She sighs and picks up a pipe. She tries to light it over the coals of the tobacco tray, but the coals are dead. She leans toward the lamp for a light.

Doro-doro crescendos, indicating the appearance of a ghost. The lamp slides out of reach. Thinking it was her imagination, she leans in again to light her pipe. Again the lamp slides away. Wearily she rises to inspect the room. She finds nothing. Suddenly she shivers and pulls her kimono tightly around her. The stage darkens.] ²⁶

The night breeze is chill.

[She slides under the covers and pulls them around her neck. Doro-doro becomes louder. She sits up. The ghost of SEIGEN appears, dressed in a dirty gray kimono. His emaciated figure seems about to disintegrate. His arms hang limp, his head bends grotesquely to one side. He seems to float in a pool of pale green light. Doro-doro subsides. Annbyed, SAKURA knocks the ashes from her pipe into the tobacco tray.]

So, it's you again is it, old Seigen's ghost? What do you want now? You follow me as if it were your right, but it's time you listened to reason.

[She poses. Shamisen and flute play eerie Netoribue.]

I moved and I moved but you followed me every place, until my best patrons left. Why? Did you want to ruin my business? Destroy my livelihood? Your ghastly appearance once terrified me. But now I know these nightly visits are just the working out of Karma. You don't frighten me. I'm used to you, Mister Apparition, and your incessant visits grow tiresome. Get out. It's dawn. It's time for you to disappear. So, go on, go home, scat! How depressing having a priest as a customer.

[She gestures roughly for him to go. He doesn't move. She sighs.]

Listen to me, Reverend Seigen. I may have been Shiragiku in a former life, but the misery you bear isn't my fault. Quit hanging around, quit nagging me. Because you're wretched, you hold me cheap. And I'm tired of it. Your rotting corpse belongs in the grave, not here. I loath it. Get out of my sight!

[She slaps the pipe on the floor and contemptuously turns her back on him. Doro-doro grows louder. SEIGEN raises his arms. She senses his response and turns.]

What? What is it you want?

[SEIGEN points to the child, then to SAKURA. She reacts. He repeats the gesture.]

This is the infant . . . born of my womb? And your jealous spirit lives on in my husband? Can it be true? My . . . own . . . child?

[Music swells. SAKURA rushes tenderly to the child, but SEIGEN raises his hand and she is forced back. She tries again, again he gestures her

26. Kabuki was performed in the daytime. To let in the light, wooden shutters running the length of the theater under the eaves were opened. Here Nabokov's stage direction reads: "Close the shutters and darken the stage."

away. SAKURA falls to her knees, weeping. She clings her hands in supplication.]

Knowing my grief, will you keep me from my child? Releas, Reverend Seigen, I beseech you.

[SEIGEN does not move. Desperately, she draws GONSUKE's sword. Drum and tsuke alternate double beats as she attacks. With a loping gait she easily repels her. She sinks to the floor. Music swells. SEIGEN glides replaced by the warm glow of the lamp. Silence. SAKURA raises to embrace her baby.]

To think I did not know you.

[The child cries. She opens her kimono and places the child to her breast.] You yearn for a mother's milk, proof we are bound by ties of blood. Past sins erased memory of my beloved child's face. I am your mother. You are my child. Pitiful one, fated to be born to misery.

[Weeping, she clings to the crying child. Yatai Bayashi festival music is heard in the distance. GONSUKE enters from the right, dragging his cloak. He has been drinking and his walk is unsteady.]

GONSUKE: Hey, wife, here I am. I'm back. I'm home. Hey, Princess. You sleeping?

SAKURA: It took you long enough.

GONSUKE [plops down on the bedding]: Of course, of course. We were drinking. We tossed it down like nobles [Sees the child.] You're nursing the brat? Forget it. Little bastard. Don't know where he came from. Leave him be, leave him be.

SAKURA: He'll be asleep soon. The least you could do is meet your own child.

GONSUKE [fuzzily]: Meat? It was good tonight. Goat meat. Ha, ha! Kid meat. I can't drink any more. Do everything in secret. Did you pull in a lot of customers tonight? [She moves as if to fix the bedding.] If you put that bedding away I'll kill you.

SAKURA [bitterly]: We're not in a brothel now. This is your house.

GONSUKE: That's stupid. I already went past my house.

SAKURA: It is your house. I tell you.

GONSUKE: Yeh? It really is? Then throw that puker kid out of my house!

Get rid of him.

[As he starts to pick up the child to throw him out, a letter falls from his breast. SAKURA quickly picks it up and reads the address.]

SAKURA: "To Matsui Gengo, from Shinobu Sota."

[Uncertain of what he has heard, he puts the child back and turns]

SAKURA hides the letter.]

GONSUKE: Hm? You walked the streets in Matsui, too? Ha! You'd better

turn a trick one way or another. Wife. Come here.

[He pulls her roughly by the hand and crosses upstairs to get a jug of wine and a cup. He forces her down on the bedding.]

Here. Have a drink. Come on, have a drink.

SAKURA: I will. I will drink with you, my Lord.

[He holds the cup out to her, but she turns away coquettishly. Unseen, she holds the letter toward the lamp and furtively reads it. He turns away, sorry at her rebuff.]

GONSUKE: You've no damn right playing high and mighty aristocrat with me, Princess. I wasn't born a flunky or a gravedigger. I'm a samurai, a real samurai, do you hear?

[He downs the cup and pours another. SAKURA looks up from the letter, shocked.]

SAKURA: As a samurai, your name was . . . ?

GONSUKE *[half-hearing]*: Name? Something never spoken.

SAKURA: Shinobu . . . Sōta . . . ?

[She poses, holding the letter behind her back. He struggles to comprehend, but his mind is befuddled by the wine.]

GONSUKE *[mumbling]*: Hmm? You know a lot, Wife?

SAKURA *[ominously]*: Yes, I do.

GONSUKE: If you do, you should know enough to drink when your lord and master commands.

SAKURA: No, no, dear Husband! The man must drink first. Allow me, dearest Master.

[Playing the wheedling courtesan, she pours for him. He drinks unsteadily.]

GONSUKE: I drank like a lord before. I'll drink like one again. *[Drinks.]* I don't give a damn if you boast you're a princess. What do I care. Overnight I'll be a great noble. And the reason? This.

[He takes out the wrapped scroll. SAKURA starts, but cannot identify it.]

It looks like an amulet and it is. It's the guardian of my rise in the world, the Miyakodori scroll. Who holds the rolled scroll? Danyūro! Ha, ha, ha!

SAKURA *[encouraging him]*: Imagine, in your possession. Yet, how could you have . . . ?

GONSUKE *[boasting, holds up the sword]*: How? I took this sword. I killed the owner of the scroll with it and then cut down a kid of twelve or

thirteen who happened onto Edo's Sumida River bank. I had to run. For awhile I was Gengo's flunky, then came this grubby life. But I hung tight

to my treasure all the time, talisman that will make Tsurigane Gonsuke Lord of Wineland, Prince of Sake Castle. Ha, ha! Then we'll drink like

lords every day!

[He does not notice SAKURA's horrified reaction. She controls herself with great effort, then leans against him provocatively.]

SAKURA: Are you being truthfu? Is it not a boastful tale designed to impress

this one?

GONSUKE *[preening]*: It's true. I did it. Slick as a monkey sliding down a tree. Ha, ha, ha! Because you're the daughter of a court noble, being wife

to a samurai lord is . . .

[Sliding a hand into her breast, he suddenly stops, realizing he has said too much. He pulls away.]

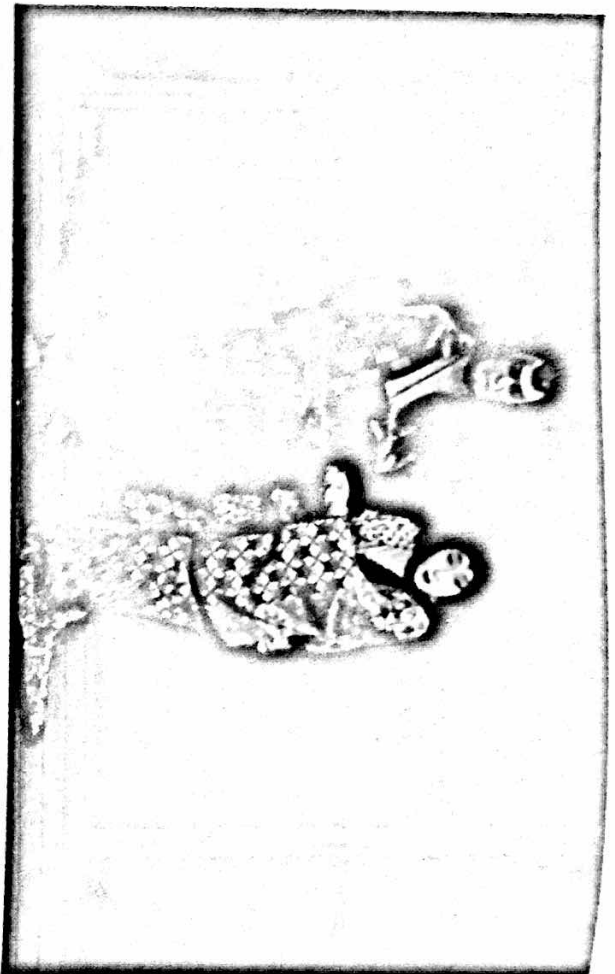
Not so. What I said just now is a lie. I made it up. It's all lies. All of it, lies . . . lies. Lies.

share

share



Sakura hooks the tobacco box. Gonsuke is unconcerned. "Here, where'd you pick up the broad? You presume upon my good nature should you imagine I would tolerate . . . this old bog stacked up here." Sakura's speech alternates between court speech and vulgar idiom (*Old Sawamura Sōjuro*). Sakura: Nakamura Jakuchōmon, Gonsuke Bando Musugorō! Page 340



SAKURA [*sweetly*] : Drink one more cup of wine, dear husband.
GONSUKE [*waiting her away*] : I can't, I can't, I'm not handsome! Please drink
out of a kabuki play. I'm Gonsuke! Ha, ha, ha, he-he-he-he-he!
good!

SAKURA: Here, don't go to sleep. Drink another one. *(She forces several cups down his throat.)*

his back in a stupor. Her wringing trail off. She shakes him, he does not move. Silence. Cautiously, she removes the scroll from inside his tunic and bites through the cord which holds it. Soft bawls tumble forth. She unrolls the scroll in the light of the lamp. She recognizes it and weeps with gratitude.]

The House of Yoshida is restored. Blessed favor that my brother's murderer and my father's is found.

[She brings the scroll to her forehead, then puts it safely away. Without a sound she unsheathes the sword.]

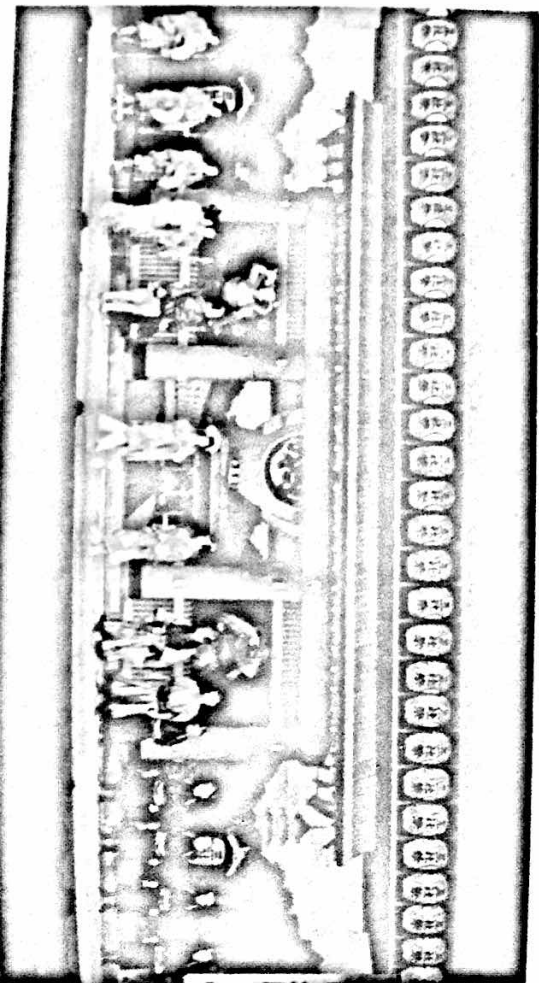
How pitiful that you are his son. This blade ended Father's life. Now you are enemies, my husband and . . . my . . . son. Please forgive me

[*Her eyes full with tears. She raises the sword. The baby cries in his sleep. Doro-doro swells. She covers his face with a quilt, then plunges the sword into his throat. The cruna ceases abruptly.*]

"Namu Amida Butsu. Namu Amida Butsu."

Toshiba

schimawari



Sakura plunges the sword into Gonsuke's side as he struggles with her. He gasps, his fingers claw the air. (*Gonsuke*: Bandō Mitsugorō; *Sakura*: Nakamura Jakuchemon) Page 348

The finale of the Three Shrines Festival scene returns to the brilliance of the play's opening. Princess Sakura poses with Hanbei and Matsukawa in front of the shrine gate, Villagers on her right and Constables on her left. Page 349

GONSUKE (*in terrible agony*) : Princess . . .
[*They rise and fight in slow, stylized movements accompanied by drum shamisen, and drum. Each sequence ends in a mix, emphasized by bottom tsuke beats.* She attacks; he stumbles to the floor. He places his right foot against her waist, holding her off. She misses the sword. They pose against her waist, holding her off.] She misses the sword. He falls against GONSUKE's hair, loosened by a STAGE ASSISTANT, fall to his strength. He struggles to take the sword from her, but lacks the strength. He struggles against a pillar. They pose SANTA, making his remarks.
He runs off to sound the alarm.
against a pillar. They pose SANTA, making his remarks.
motion and peeks through the door. He runs off to sound the alarm.
GONSUKE seizes SAKURA's kimono and manages to pull her to the floor.
They pose. Music swells. They rush past each other simultaneously, and as
of Cadogan. The Treasury of Loyola

27. Oishi Yuranosuke, one of the retainers. As a ruse he pretends to be a

they turn back the sword plunges into GONSUKE. GONSUKE gasps and clutches his side. His fingers stiffen. He dies. Silence. The sword slips from SAKURA's trembling hand.]

SAKURA: For though he was evil and for salvation of father and of son, I now consecrate to Buddha . . .

[She cuts a lock of her hair as an offering to help them attain Buddhahood. Suddenly alarm signals of clacking bamboo are heard off right. Shamisen play rapid Hayame. SAKURA wipes the blade and sheathes it. A dozen villagers crowd on from the right. They carry sticks and clubs, some carry lanterns. Though eager to see a woman murderer, they are afraid to enter the house. They mill about outside. Clutching the sword and the scroll, SAKURA cautiously slides the door open. She sees the crowd of villagers and freezes. SENTARŌ, mingling with the crowd, sees the scroll and sword and guesses what has happened. He slips unobtrusively away to bring the news to HANBEL.]

VILLAGERS: Murderer! Murderess!

[They threaten her with sticks and clubs. She slams the door to battan tsuke beats. All pose. A sharp ki clack: the curtain is run closed to soft, continuous ki clacks. Drums, flute, and bell play fast Yatai Bayashi between scenes.]

ozume

FINALE THREE SHRINES FESTIVAL SCENE

[Two ki clacks: the curtain is run open. Shamisen, drums, and flute play brilliant Itcho, "Single Rhythm." Tsuke beats rise to a furious climax as HANBEL comes into view on a trap rising in the center of the stage. Behind him a black curtain covers the set. HANBEL is dressed as SAKURA, his face covered.²⁸ A large wicker hamper is strapped to his shoulders. To battari tsuke beats he poses. Music changes to Yatai Bayashi. HANBEL runs onto the banamichi to rapid bata-bata tsuke beats, stopping when he sees a festival parade approaching. A dozen young MEN, dressed in light green kimonos and wearing large boatlike hats, dance toward him playing binzasara sound-makers. HANBEL tries to escape down the second banamichi, but his way is blocked by a second group of celebrants, young GIRLS dressed in boys' pale blue and pink kimonos and trousers. They strike jangling metal staves on the ground in time to their dance movements. HANBEL moves center. The two groups pass in front of him. They notice him. Suddenly the men step out of their green kimonos, revealing short black costumes underneath. They are CONSTABLES in disguise, searching for SAKURA. They surround HANBEL. Music stops.]

CONSTABLES: Do not move!

28. An example of a quick-change (hayagawari). Throughout the play Danjūrō has been making quick-changes as he has alternated playing Seigen and Gonsuke in quick succession. Here he appears as Princess Sakura only a few moments after being seen as the murdered Gonsuke. In a few more moments he will drop his disguise as Sakura and become Hanbel. Within perhaps twenty minutes Danjūrō is seen playing four roles.

ganterifu
shigochō

[With their metal rods of office, they hold HANBEL fast. All pose in a group mie to battari tsuke beats. A sharp ki clack: the black curtain falls and is whisked away by STAGE ASSISTANTS, revealing the colorful structure, painted Chinese red and gold. The main gate is an imposing in the archway. Cherry trees fill the background with a sea of pink blossoms. Music resumes. HANBEL throws off the CONSTABLES. They face him from both sides of the stage.]

FIRST CONSTABLE [following tempo of music]: Broken woman, murderer . . .

SECOND CONSTABLE: . . . We will apprehend you.

THIRD CONSTABLE: . . . during the festivities . . .

FOURTH CONSTABLE: . . . of Asakusa Kannon . . .

FIFTH CONSTABLE: . . . Three Shrine Festival!

[They press in on HANBEL. Suddenly he throws off his disguise. They fall back astonished. They rush forward again and surround him.]

FIRST CONSTABLE: Mischance! Mischance! . . .

ALL: . . . the princess to us!

[SHICHIRO rushes on. The two fight with the CONSTABLES and press them back. All pose in a group mie to loud battari tsuke beats.]

SHICHIRO: Inanoya Hanbel, has the stolen Miyakodori scroll been restored?

HANBEL: Through Princess Sakura's long travel it is in our possession. And the crime of our Lord's death and young Unewaka's righteously avenged.

SHICHIRO: And the princess . . . ?

HANBEL: Concealed in this hamper for protection. Let us together . . .

SHICHIRO: . . . go to the mansion. The House of Yoshida will be restored!

FIRST CONSTABLE: But Princess Sakura is a murderess!

ALL: You shall not move!

HANBEL: We shall!

[They all pose in a group mie to battari tsuke beats. Drums, flute, and bell burst into fast Kinjishi, "Lion Song," as the cast breaks from the pose and kneels to face the audience.]

HANBEL: Ladies and gentlemen! Following this we pray you will enjoy our program's concluding dance scene!

[Small drums play Uchikomi, "Frenzied Beating." The cast rises and poses in a group mie to loud battari tsuke beats. The curtain is slowly run closed to accelerating ki clacks. Drums and flute play Shingō.]