

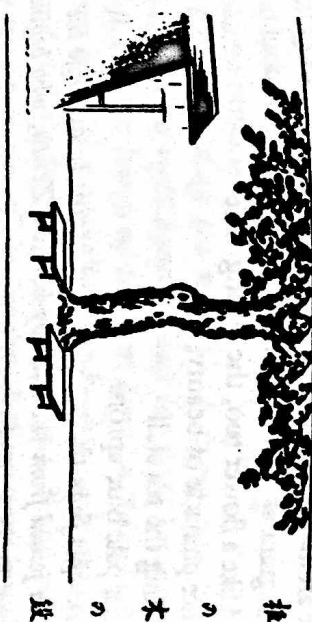
Drawn by restless tides
And flowing on, flowing ever on,
Amid the foaming billows?
No one may know.

the closing phrases of the NŌ play *Funa Ben-kei*. See Nomura Hachirō, ed., *Tōkyoku shū*, 1:334.

Act Three

SCENE I

THE PASANIA TREE



(At SR is a simple hut where tea is sold to drink. A woven straw mat has been unrolled and leans against its front as a shade. Near the center is a tall pasania tree with wide outstretched branches and full foliage. Beneath the tree are two simple benches draped in red cloth. The near background is a landscape of paddy fields and their dikes. Beyond the paddies are groves of trees at the base of low earth-colored mountains, green shrubbery mottling their peaks. As the narration commences, the stage is unoccupied.)

NARRATOR: Three places there are, known as
Yoshino:

In Tango, in Musashi, and along the Yamato Road,¹

¹. The old Tango province is now part of the metropolitan district of Kyoto. Musashi is the old provincial name

Where famed Mount Kimbu and its temple
stand,

Its precious treasure

The statue of Miroku in the Zaô Hall.²

On days this figure is unveiled,

People throng from fields and hills alike,

And tea stalls stand along the roads,

The aroma of their brewing teas

As fragrant as the flowers.

And like a flower too, the young wife

At her pinnacle of beauty,

Tending the tea stall

In her pale blue apron.

(Kosen emerges from the tea stall and begins to arrange the benches.

She is soon joined from the stall by her son Zenta, who begins to play in the sand.)

But with a boy of five or six

Crying "Mama" at her side—

Like tea grown cold, the fragrance fades.

Now Wakaba no Naishi comes along

With her young son Rokudai

And retainer Kokingo.

Parted from her husband Koremori

And left to wither away,

Now is she all the more

So like a broken branch bereft of buds.

for what is today part of metropolitan Tokyo and neighboring Saitama prefecture. The town of Yoshino located along the Yamato Road is in Nara prefecture, some forty kilometers south of the city of Nara. The action of this act takes place in this last region.

2. Mount Kimbu is also known as Mount Yoshino, where the famous seventh century priest En no Gyoja is believed to have founded a temple dedicated to the Buddha Zaô, a central figure venerated by the austere *yamabushi* sect of mountain priests. The present temple dates from its rebuilding in 1456. Zaô is a deity of Indian origin, believed variously to be associated with Miroku (Maîtreya, the Buddha of the future) and to be an incarnation of the historical Sakyanami Buddha.

Having fled from Saga, their hopes are set
On finding Koremori on Mount Kôya.

With traveling bundles wrapped in cloth

And tied across their backs,

They have passed through Oshumi

And come to Shimoichi Village

Here in Yoshino.³

Young Rokudai has been ill,

And luck has brought them to this tea house.

Kokingo urges Naishi to rest.

(With Rokudai leading the way, Naishi enters from SR, a thin bamboo cane in her right hand, a black lacquered hat with red cords in her left. Kokingo brings up the rear, carrying their rolls of baggage slung front and back diagonally across his shoulder, a straw hat in his right hand. As Rokudai rubs his ailing stomach, Naishi comforts him, and the two sit on one of the benches. Kokingo seats himself on the ground.)

KOKINGO: Here, rest on this bench for a while.

NARRATOR: He lowers the bundle from his back

And signals for tea.

The maid responds with cordiality

As Naishi looks around with care.

(Kosen brings out a tray with two cups, Zenta at her heels. Naishi takes one cup and has Rokudai drink. Kokingo takes the other, drinks a bit and spits it out.)

NAISHI *(spying Zenta)*: Ah, I see you have a child too. I have this one with me, a forgotten memento of his father. He's fallen ill with a stomachache along the way, and we have just exhausted our supply of medicine. As a mother yourself, I'm sure you can sympathize. If you have any medicine put aside, I wonder if I might request some.

³ Oshumi (now Oshimi) is a village in modern Nara prefecture. Shimoichi village is situated along the Yoshino River in Nara prefecture, some two or three kilometers west of the city of Yoshino. Popular legend claims that Taira Koremori lived in hiding there after the Heike defeat. See Yûda, *Bunraku jôryû shû*, 308, n. 22.

KOSEN: Oh, that's a terrible thing to happen. But my boy here has never had a stomachache, so I'm afraid I haven't a thing.

NAISHI: Oh my, I don't know what I'm going to do.

KOSEN: Oh, wait a moment. Fortunately, in front of the village temple there's a person who sells darasuke medicine made over in Dorogawa.⁴ That young man with you could get some in no time.

KOKINGO: No, wait. I'm not familiar with this place. I'm sorry to trouble you, but couldn't you get it for us?

KOSEN: Oh, that's easy enough. I'll fetch you some. Zenta, will you stay here, or do you want to go with me?

ZENTA (*clinging to his mother, and in a piping voice*): I want to go with you.

(*Kasen and Zenta exit SL.*)

NARRATOR: A pretty thing is Kosen, Taking her child in hand,

And noble is her heart as off she goes To buy medicine at the temple.

Naishi watches her leave.

NAISHI: What a pleasant girl. Oh look, Rokudai. There are lots of nuts here from this big tree. Wouldn't you like to have fun picking them up? Kokingo, you don't mind picking some up, do you?

NARRATOR: Encouraged by her cheerful words . . .

KOKINGO: Yes, I'll pick some up too.

NARRATOR: Rokudai gets up,

His illness half forgotten in the game, As Naishi too joins in.

NAISHI: Here, let's gather them up.

KOKINGO (*soliculously*): No, I'll get them for you.

NARRATOR: Kokingo, a young man close to twenty, Behaves unlike a grownup To cheer the child, as they gather

4. Dorogawa was a small town not far from Yoshino. The *darasuke* medicine, a dark bitter potion used to treat stomachaches, was well known in the area. See Yûda. *Bunroku ioruri shû*, 380, n. 23.

Horse chestnuts and *kaya* nuts.⁵ Just then a young man comes in, Walking briskly on weary legs.

He too carries dangling from his shoulder A traveler's bundle wrapped in cloth.

He spies the tea house.

(*Gonta enters quickly from SR. He carries the same sort of pack over his shoulder as Kokingo had been carrying. He wears a light rain cape and has a cloth wrapped about his head, a wicker hat in his hand. The others take no notice of him as he sits on one of the benches and places his cloth bundle next to Kokingo's pack.*)

GONTA: Well, I guess I'll take a rest here and have a smoke.

(*He takes out a pipe with a thimblelike bowl and packs some tobacco into it.*)

NARRATOR: With a thump, he drops his bundle on the bench.

GONTA (*speaking into the tea hut*): Excuse me, but I'll just help myself to a light.

NARRATOR: He puffs away at his pipe.

GONTA: Eh, are all of you folks going to the unveiling of the statue?⁶ The young master here stopping off for a spell? He's not like the country children where I come from. My, but isn't he a handsome lad.

NARRATOR: Though he offers praise And tries to strike up a chat,

The others are reserved, And without exchanging words Continue gathering nuts.

After a short rest, the man speaks up again.

GONTA: Look here, all those nuts that have fallen from the tree have worms in them. They may look all right, but there's nothing inside. Get the ones on the tree.

5. *Kaya* nuts (also called *tochi* nuts, or horse chestnuts) are from the tree known botanically as *torreyia nucifera* (a member of the yew family). It is curious that these are the nuts being gathered, since the tree in the scene is a pasania. 6. The unveiling of religious statues normally kept from view was an occasion for pilgrimages.

KOKINGO: What are you talking about? This tree is over twenty feet tall. We haven't got claws to climb with.

GONTA: Ah, there's an easy way to get them.

KOKINGO: What's that?

GONTA (*tapping the tobacco from his pipe and putting it away in his tobacco case*): Here, let me show you what skill can do.

NARRATOR: He picks up a stone,

Throws it at a branch,

And down the nuts fall.

(*Gonta starts picking up nuts himself, putting them into his wicker hat, which he then dumps into Rokudai's hat.*)

So happy is Rokudai

He quite forgets his discomfort.

ROKUDAI: Oh, pick them up, Kokingo.

NARRATOR: Her spirits lifted,

Naishi too is delighted.

NAISHI: Oh, what a nice thing you've done for us. Thank you, thank you.

NARRATOR: She bows to him, a gesture that

He knows is more than he deserves,

But he keeps this knowledge to himself

And shows a proud demeanor.

GONTA: Heh, heh, see how well I did it? Well, I'd like to demonstrate it a little more, but I've got a long road ahead, can't entertain you any longer. I've got to be off.

(*He jumps up, grabs the pack Kokingo had left on the bench, hiding the pack with his hat.*)

NARRATOR: He hoists the bundle to his back.

GONTA: Perhaps we'll meet again.

NARRATOR: So saying, he takes his leave. (*Gonta exits SL.*)

Kokingo completes his nut gathering.

KOKINGO: Madam, I think this is enough. That man just now was a clever one.

NARRATOR: As he watches the departing man,

He notices the bundle on the bench. (*Startled.*)

Though of the same color,

It seems somehow different.

To the bench he dashes

And examines the contents.

But the things inside are unfamiliar.

In this one is a leather covered basket,

While his had been of wisteria vine.

KOKINGO (*musings*): I wonder, did he purposely go off with our bundle while we were preoccupied with the nuts, or was he just careless? (*He reties the bundle loosely and replaces it on the bench.*) In any case, I'll run after him and exchange it.

NARRATOR: Kokingo is set to dash off in pursuit,

When the man comes clattering back

From the direction he had gone.

GONTA (*bowing*): Oh, my apologies. I made a mistake.

NARRATOR: He holds out the bundle.

GONTA: It was beginning to get dark, and I was impatient to be off. Your bundle was the same color, so I didn't pay attention to whether it was heavy or light. I just carelessly took the wrong one and suddenly realized the mistake on the road.

I've come back to return it and offer my apologies. I'm terribly sorry. (*He lowers himself to the ground and bows.*)

NARRATOR: He begs with an earnestness

That belies his looks.

Kokingo breathes a sigh of relief.

KOKINGO: If it was a mistake, there's no need for an apology.

As long as nothing happens to be missing. All right?

GONTA: Why, if there were to be any discrepancy, I wouldn't be able to face you. Please, examine it carefully.

KOKINGO: Hmm. All right then, if you say so. I don't have any doubts, mind you, but I'll just take a look.

NARRATOR: He opens and checks the bundle

And finds nothing amiss.

(*Kokingo examines the contents, sees the portrait of Koremori and quickly tucks it into his sleeve. He then returns Gonta's bag to him.*)

KOKINGO: Let's just say it was an inadvertent error. I'm quite satisfied. Here, you may take yours and be on your way.

NARRATOR: As he hands back

The cloth wrapped bundle on the bench,
The man's face grows suspicious.

GONTA: Um, I see you untied the inner package.

KOKINGO: Well, it looked different from mine at first, but just in case I might be wrong, I glanced through it.

NARRATOR: As Kokingo speaks,

The man opens the inner basket,

Scatters things about,

Pulls out a lined gown,

Searches an unlined cotton kimono.

Astonished, he holds the basket up

And shakes it violently.

GONTA: What's this? Hey, it's gone, gone, it's gone!

NARRATOR: He rolls his eyes about.

KOKINGO: What's gone? What is it you can't find?

NARRATOR: Kokingo stands worriedly by,

Looking all around.

Having planned it all,

The quarrelsome man

Tucks up his sleeves belligerently.

GONTA: Look here, young man, this basket contained twenty ryō⁷ in gold that someone gave me to pay for a prayer service at a temple up on Mount Kōya. You took it! You're trying

to cheat me! Give it to me. Come on, let's have it! GIVE IT BACK!!

BACK!!

NARRATOR: At this unlooked for predicament,

Kokingo is roused to fury

And readies his sword for a fight.

(He whips the cloth traveling cover from the hilt of his sword, pulls it slightly from the scabbard and strikes a stance of readiness.)

KOKINGO: Listen, you low life, if you've got something to say

to a samurai, let's hear it!

NARRATOR: Kokingo's face wears a look of threat,

7. The gold ryō coin was a common high denomination currency during the eighteenth century. Twenty ryō constituted a considerable sum.

But the man remains undaunted.

GONTA *(impudently)*: Ha ha ha ha ha. The thief always puts on a bold face, they say. Well, I won't be put off by your high-handed posturings, not me. Are you trying to intimidate



KOKINGO: I've tolerated you all I'm going to! (Gonta cringes before the threatening Kokingo.) (Act 3, scene 1)

me, drawing that rusty-as-a-red-sardine sword of yours? Save your cure act for some nice spring afternoon. It's only twenty ryō. Stop quibbling and hand it over, before you're arrested as a common criminal.

(At this point, Kosen and her child return from their errand and, unnoticed by the others, quietly enter the tea hut.)

NARRATOR: Kokingo recognizes him

KOKINGO: For the crooked swindler that he is.

NARRATOR: I've tolerated you all I'm going to!

Kokingo looks at his two companions,

Stenly he endures the insolence

And takes a breath to control himself.

(In the interplay between Kokingo and Gonta, when Kokingo threatens to use his sword Gonta cringes; as soon as Kokingo controls himself, Gonta resumes his strutting truculence.)

KOKINGO *(in forced levity)*: Ah ha ha ha ha ha. Young man, you've made a mistake. As you can see, I am accompanying these two leg-weary travelers here, so even if thousands of gold coins spilled out of your pack, I wouldn't think to pay it any attention. Go ahead, ask them.

GONTA: Now wait, wait, just wait a minute! You've brought along these tired travelers just for the purpose of robbing people. Nobody would suspect you. Makes it easier. It's the latest thing these days. Now, there weren't thousands of gold coins in that bundle, just . . . heh heh . . . just twenty ryō.

KOKINGO: And you've made up your mind that I stole it.

GONTA: Well, its obvious!

KOKINGO: And your proof that I took it?

GONTA *(sputtering)*: Well . . . why . . . why the hell did you untie the basket inside the bundle? Look here, this basket's mine.

"As long as there's nothing missing," you said about your own parcel, didn't you? That was just an empty quibble. All right, let's have it! HAND IT OVER!

NARRATOR: He draws close to Kokingo.

(Gonta waves the two parts of the basket about, then advances on Kokingo and pokes him in the chest.)

KOKINGO: That does it!

NARRATOR: As Kokingo draws his sword,

Naishi, all aflutter, holds him back.

(As Kokingo brandishes his sword, Gonta tips one of the benches on end and hides cringing behind it. Naishi comes up behind Kokingo to restrain him.)

NAISHI: Kokingo, your anger is quite justified, I understand. But if you lose your temper, it will make things difficult for me and for the child. I know you must be angry, but be patient. Give in to what the fellow wants and settle the matter quietly. Think of the disaster that might befall me and the boy, and calm yourself, I beg you.

NARRATOR: As she speaks, she is overcome by tears.

Kokingo, his blood running hot,
Cannot bear to see her weep.

KOKINGO *(with great emotion)*: If these were better days for us, it wouldn't give me satisfaction even to cut off the arms and legs of such a lout. But we are like fugitives, who take fright even from the wind blowing through a field of miscanthus, thinking it might be a pursuing party. I'll do as you wish. But it really does gall me.

(Gonta remains quaking in fear behind the shield he has made of the bench.)

NARRATOR: Kokingo must serve as escort

For his two precious companions,

And so he grits his teeth

And bears his deep chagrin.

Seeing this, the other man

Is filled again with impudence.

GONTA: Now that you've warmed your pocket with my twenty ryō, what kind of a face is that? *(Teasingly)* Oh, I'm scared, I'm so scared. Ha ha ha ha ha. So you're going to kill me with that red sardine of a sword? Trying to intimidate me with that scowl on your face? I'm going to pull out those hairs on the front of your head, one by one. And the money, have you already hidden it? Well, I'll search for it, starting with that wench who's with you.

NARRATOR: As the man moves toward Naishi,

Kokingo grabs him by the neck

And drags him back.

From the money for their journey

Kokingo, glaring, pays the man as asked.

KOKINGO: Since I have to accompany these people here, who

are important to me, here's the twenty ryō you've swindled

from me. Take it now and get out!

(Kokingo throws a packet of money in Gonta's face, knocking him down.)

NARRATOR: Kokingo throws the money packet at him,

But as it is with swindlers,
The man is blinded by the sight of gold,
And swiftly he snatches it up,
Counting the coins as they clink by his ear.

GONTA (*speaking as though to himself but actually for Kokingo's benefit*): Oh, that was a close call. If I hadn't had my wits about me, this young hooligan would've swiped even more.

NARRATOR: His words are filled with bitter spite.

KOKINGO: I'll smash your insulting jaw!
(*Kokingo again puts his hand to the hilt of his sword, and Gonta again cringes, trying to hide behind his wicker hat.*)

NARRATOR: Naishi holds back the threatening Kokingo.

NAISHI: Come, before anything else happens.

NARRATOR: Young Rokudai in tow, she leaves,
And Kokingo too is dragged away,
Helplessly nursing his ire
As they hurry off

To lodgings in Kamichi.⁸ (*The three exit SL.*)

GONTA: Ha ha ha ha ha. He could glare at me a hundred times, I wouldn't care. Why each time would be worth one bu, wouldn't it? Nice piece of work!

NARRATOR: The crooked Gonta tucks away the gold
Into the fold of his kimono.

As he's set to race off to the gambling den,
His wife at the tea house bars his way.

KOSEN: Gonta, where are you going?

GONTA: Oh, Kosen. You left the shop open. Where've you been?

KOSEN: I went over to Sakamoto¹⁰ to buy some medicine for some travelers.

GONTA: Oh, that was a good move. If I'd been here I'd probably have just been a nuisance. Good thing I slipped away.

8. A town in modern Nara prefecture some eight kilometers east of the village of Shinmoichi.

9. Gonta's calculation is a bit off. One ryō equaled four bu; one hundred bu would be twenty-five ryō.

10. There were several places in the region with Sakamoto in their names. Yūda (*Bumraku jōmuri shū*, 381, n. 26) speculates as to which one was Kosen's destination.

NARRATOR: She grabs him by the front of his robe
And pulls him to her.

KOSEN: Gonta, you're trying to pull some wool over my eyes. You didn't slip away. You were just making a great fuss about something when I came back a little while ago. If you swindled somebody, show me what you cheated them out of. I don't know what it might be, but I was listening in the shadow of that pine over there. Oh, you . . . you do some awful things. You may look like your parents, but you're not like them at all. Your father is Yazaemon, the former Yasuke, of the Tsurube Sushi Shop¹¹, and he's a man of influence in this village, but the way you behave one would think you'd been disowned by him. We were some distance away when we lived in Gose.¹² But even after we came to live nearer, here in Shinmoichi, he hasn't come near me, your wife, or even his grandchild here. You've got a reputation among people for being "Crooked Gonta" and "Swindler Gonta" because of the way you behave. Don't you love your son Zenta? If you need money for your gambling so much, you could get it by selling off your wife and child. I ask you again, please give it up. What karma has made you so frightening?

NARRATOR: She clings to him, lamenting,
But he sends her reeling away.

GONTA: Hey, you'll tear my clothes. You're always nagging me with the same old line. Look here, any stealing or swindling I do is because of you.

KOSEN: Oh, such outrageous things I have to listen to. Why do you say that?

GONTA: Why do I say it? You know why. I went through the

11. There is indeed a Tsurube Sushi Shop in Shinmoichi today, and the proprietor possesses documents showing that it has existed there at least as far back as the middle years of the seventeenth century, enjoying a high reputation for its *tsurube* in several nearby provinces. See Yūda, *Bumraku jōmuri shū*, 381, n. 27. A the Tsurube Sushi Shop in the making of its sushi.

12. A town in modern Nara prefecture, about ten kilometers north of Shinmoichi.

coming of age ceremony when I was fifteen. On instructions from my old man I went to Gose and set up a sushi house. Then I found you there working as one of the unlicensed whores, and once I got to like you I couldn't give you up. To get money, I took to stealing my mother's savings—she snores like a shark, but she sleeps like a Buddha. Then I embezzled all of the savings of the shop and the money from the clients' accounts, and I used up half of all I owned—you understand? With that, the old man threw me out of the house, he *did* disown me. I was just too much for him to handle. As fate would have it, you were pregnant with this brat at the time, and your boss demanded money to pay off your indenture. So, I stole the rice set aside for the land tax and used that to pay off your boss. Then the village headman, that ass, he came complaining about it, said he'd have my head. Said I had to pay it all back in annual installments. He came damn near every day dunning me, so to settle that account I turned to gambling. I moved up in the world, to small-time extortion and swindling. In the meantime, I cut a hole through the wall of the old man's storehouse to see what I could take from there. But my sister Osato and that guy living in my father's house were crooning at each other the whole night, so I lost that chance altogether. Now that fortune has come my way today, I'm going to go with my luck and give my mother a fleecing—I can take her for two or three kanme.¹³ You go out and buy some sake and wait for me. Hey, Zenta, don't you fall asleep on me as soon as the sun goes down. If you can't stay up all night, I won't hand the trade on to you.

(During his monologue, Gonta variously mimes the action he describes. While talking to Kosen, he takes his rain cape and spreads it on the ground. From his tobacco pouch he produces a set of dice and starts to

13. The kanme, or kan, was a unit both of money and of weight. In south-western Japan, where the play is set, the preferred currency was silver, which usually traded by weight. In Edo, gold was the more common large denomination coin. Four kanme of silver equaled one gold ryō coin.

such Zenta how to gamble. In the course of this instruction, he alternately praises and cuffs Zenta. Finally, he takes up the cape and tucks it under his left arm.)

NARRATOR: As he stands up, his wife holds him back.

KOSEN: What a terrible thing to do, cheating even your own mother. Please, come on home.

NARRATOR: She clings to him, but he throws her aside.

KOSEN: Oh, Zenta, make him stay.

NARRATOR: As his mother bids him,

The clever boy speaks up.

ZENTA *(in a high piping voice)*: Papa, come home, come!

NARRATOR: Like a creeping vine,

Zenta wraps himself

About his father's arm.

No good, thinks Gonta,

For the lad to follow after him.

Against his will

He is drawn back by the child,

Bound all the more by ties of blood.

(Zenta buries his head in Gonta's stomach, holding to him and pushing him back. Gonta, his attitude softening, gives him a couple of gentle taps on the rump.)

GONTA: Ah, all of this has put me off. Maybe I can make a new start.

NARRATOR: Even an ogre would be moved by the child.

GONTA *(speaking gently)*: What cold hands you have.

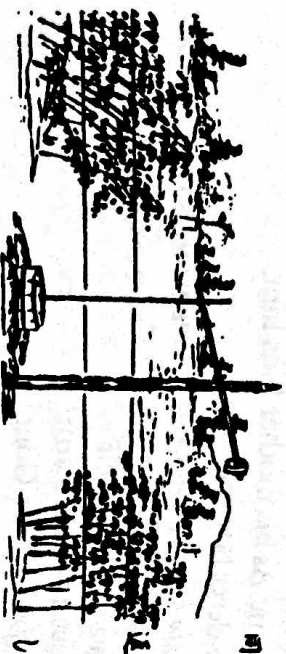
(He holds Zenta's hands in his to warm them.)

NARRATOR: He takes the lad by the hand, And with his wife they start for home.

(Holding hands, they exit to SR as the clappers signal a change of scene.)

SCENE 2

THE DEATH OF KOKINGO



(Dusk gathers along a roadway through a bamboo grove surrounding rice paddies. At SR and SL are stands of bamboo, a thicker grove visible in the far background beyond a foreground of tan rice fields. At center is a single small pine tree. A sloping roadway descends to the stage from between the bamboo stalks at SR. As the narration begins, there is no one on stage.)

NARRATOR: As the sun is sinking in the west,

Kokingo Takesato escorts

Lady Naishi and her young son Rokudai.

(To the excited slap of the clappers, Naishi stumbles in along the road that enters at SR, pulling Rokudai after her. She looks behind her anxiously, then leads Rokudai off SL.)

In the village of Kamichii

Kokingo was surrounded

By scores of Tomokara's men,
And now he suffers many wounds.
Yet still he thinks only

To return with his charges to the Capital.

In pursuit come several hundred men,
Crying that the fugitives shan't escape.

(Inokuma Dainoshin appears from downstage SR. As he advances onto the stage, he looks back at the stand of bamboo. He takes a stalk and fashions it into a spear, then hides himself in the bamboo thicket at SL. Soon after, Kokingo comes in from SR, fighting furiously with four pursuers. Kokingo's upper garment has been pulled down, and his formerly dressed hair has been loosened in the battle and now flies in a wild shock about his head. As the narration continues, he slashes left and right, killing three of his attackers and putting the fourth to flight SL.)

Though he bears the wounds of battle,

Kokingo's spirit remains

As strong as iron, firm as stone.

His sword lashes out in reckless fury,

Downing here three, there seven, men

As he slashes through the horde,

Leaving behind the bodies of his foes

Like fallen maple leaves

And flowers of the autumn.

Now the pursuing party's chief,

Inokuma Dainoshin, belatedly comes out. (From his hiding place at SR.)

INOKUMA: Yaa, Kokingo! You escaped death once. Now where do you think you're going? My master, Lord Tomokara, was in a towering rage when we let you escape earlier at North Saga, and I felt so low that I couldn't return to his mansion. We made a priest back at the hermitage confess, and since then we've been following you along this road. Now then, hand over Koremori's wife and child. It's time for you to give up and kill yourself!

NARRATOR: At his shouts, Kokingo grits his teeth,

Smarting at his bleeding wounds.

KOKINGO: Never! So long as I, Kokingo Takesato, son of Shime Hôgan, draw a breath!

INOKUMA: Those words seal your death!

NARRATOR: Up springs Inokuma, slashing out, But with his own blade Kokingo Parries the blows with a clang.

Displaying nimble footwork,

He swings around to dodge a strike.

Yet however sharp his skill,

His wounds have their effect.

(*Naishi and Rokudai re-enter from SL.*)

Naishi and Rokudai, terrified, uncertain,

Pick pebbles from the ground,

And with a will they fling them at their foe.

Into stubborn Inokuma's eyes they fly.

Now, with his foe's eyesight confused,

Kokingo slashes in and cuts him twixt the eyes,

And down he topples with a thud.

As Kokingo leaps upon him,

Inokuma thrusts upward with his sword,

Running Kokingo through the ribs,

Pitching him in a backward bend.

When Inokuma tries to rise,

Again Naishi hurls sand in his face.

Inokuma has been slashed, but Kokingo too

Struggles painfully with his wound,

On the verge of passing

To the realm beyond.

Yet steadfast in fidelity,

Kokingo with no trouble holds his rival down.

Then with a push he delivers the lethal thrust.

KOKINGO (*bearing up under his pain*): There, I'm glad I finally finished him off.

NARRATOR: Now, heavy is his weary heart,

And with a groan he sinks down to the ground.

Naishi and Rokudai console him

And take him in their arms.

NAISHI (*in tears*): Oh, Kingo, Kingo, don't leave us. Come back, I beg you. If you die, what's to become of this child? Oh, how wretched, my heart is broken.

NARRATOR: Her wailing voice reaches Kokingo's ears;

He lifts his head.

KOKINGO (*slowly and painfully*): Oh, Lady Naishi, Master Rokudai, please forget about me. My heart is fearless still, but I can't go on. My young lord, your humble Kokingo in his last breath has something he must tell you. Listen carefully.

My lord Koremori had earlier wished to enter the priesthood, and as I was to meet someone at Kumano Bay, I was to escort you two safely to Mount Kôya. But wounded as I am, I simply cannot take another step. Young master, you accompany Lady Naishi to the Kaniya way station and leave her there.¹ Have someone take you up the mountain. Don't mention your father's name; just say you've come to see a novice who has recently entered the priesthood. We are in the midst of our enemies both to the west and to the east, so don't let them know you are a noble of the Heike. If later when you have grown to manhood you should remember Kokingo, then as one drop of water can nourish a single flower it will sustain me on the road to the world beyond. I will be waiting to hear how you have grown up. Ah, how bitter is this parting from you. (*He weeps.*)

NARRATOR: He speaks with labored breath, As Rokudai clings to him.

ROKUDAI: Don't die, Kokingo! If you die, I'll never see my father.

¹ Kaniya, in modern Wakayama prefecture, was a way station at the entry to Fudô Slope leading up to Mount Kôya. Since women were not permitted on Mount Kôya, Naishi would have to wait there while Rokudai went up the mountain to see his father.

NARRATOR: Naishi, in tears,
Comes quickly to his side.

NAISHI: Listen to him, Kokingo, even though he's only a child. We look to you alone. Just think to yourself, "I won't die, I won't die till I've seen Koremori." All of the Heike clan has perished; the whole wide world is in the hands of our enemies. How can we survive much longer? Kill us too!

NARRATOR: Small wonder that she grieves,
And the injured Kokingo
Is choked with tears.

KOKINGO: Our former lord Shigemori is a saint of Japan. My young master here is his grandson, so it cannot be that he is without the blessings of all the gods and Buddhas. Believe that he has a promising future, and put such ill-considered thoughts from your mind. *(He staggers to his feet and points SL with his sword.)* Oh look, the lights of lanterns over there. Another search party is probably on its way after us. Quickly, take the young master and go.

NAISHI: No, no, I will not abandon you wounded here. Where would I go? If you die, I shall die with you.

NARRATOR: She sits beside him on the ground.

KOKINGO: Ah, what faint-hearted words. Isn't Master Rokudai important? Kokingo is not one to die from such wounds as these. If you won't listen to me, I will kill myself right now. *(He points his sword at his abdomen.)*

NAISHI: No, please, wait. If you care so deeply for us, then we will go on ahead. Kokingo, don't die, I beg you.

KOKINGO: Don't worry about me. I'm lucky. I'll follow after you.

NAISHI: We will surely be waiting for you.

NARRATOR: While she speaks, nearer draw
The threatening lantern lights.

Now with bitter sadness in her breast
Naishi takes the young child's hand
And leads him off in flight.

How piteous her warmth of heart.
The wounded man watches them depart.

(With many glances back, Naishi and Rokudai exit SL.)

KOKINGO *(in great pain)*: I lied when I said I wouldn't die. Even if I had the strength of all the Buddhas of the universe, how could I survive with all these wounds? *(Gasping.)* Lady Naishi, Master Rokudai, this is my last farewell.

NARRATOR: On the point of death,
Now past six of the deepening night—
The very hour of his birth—

He takes his final breath,
And like the morning dew he fades away.

(Still on his feet, Kokingo sways and lurches backward against the pine tree at center stage. He swings around with his sword, cutting a branch from the tree, and then he sinks to the ground and lies still.)

The lanterns that soon arrive
Are those of the village's five-man group,²
Who chat noisily among themselves
Along the mountain road.

The village headman Saku draws to a halt.

(Saku and another villager, with Yazaemon between them, enter SR along the sloping road and stop where it joins the stage. Each carries a paper lantern.)

SAKU: Say, Yazaemon, you're a sushi presser, and that brings something to my mind. Those samurai from Kamakura who swarmed in on us just now and pressed³ us into service—they whispered into my ear, rustling like so many centipedes. Said things that would scare a person bald. We bowed and scraped and agreed to everything they said without thinking about it. Do you know what it was all about?

² As a means of insuring social order during the Tokugawa period, communities were organized into five-man groups having collective responsibility for their members.

³ Yazaemon's sushi shop makes *oshiizushi*, a sushi made by pressing the finished product with a weighted lid. Hence the pun here on the verb *osu*, "press."

YAZAEMON: Oh, it's perfectly clear. Haven't you all measured me up by now? This is Yazaemon here. When I finally gave up on my own son, I wouldn't let him even come close to my door. Once I've figured things out, I'm not one to sit around and let my legs fall asleep. The last thing the samurai said to us gives us a wonderful chance. The search party told us that a young man and a woman with a child had escaped from Saga and had come to this village. At that point, the chief creep of the search party said that there'd be a reward if the fugitives were caught. So there, we've got a golden opportunity in this. Every one of you keep a good watch.

VILLAGER: Oh, yeah, and for a thing like this we ought to go get that ill-tempered son of yours Gon . . . I mean Master Gontarō to help out.⁴

NARRATOR: As the rest of the group goes off

Along the mountain road,
Yazaemon descends the slope.

Then, just ahead of him,
He comes upon a wounded man.

With a gasp he jumps aside.

The feeling is an eerie one,
But he lifts the lantern high

And slowly, slowly draws near.

(As he moves across the stage toward SL, Yazaemon stumbles in the dark on Kokingo's body and leaps back. He then inches forward for a better look with the aid of his lantern.)

YAZAEMON: My, he's been cut up something brutal. Looks like a traveler. If this had been done by a highwayman, he'd have stripped the man naked. Maybe it's the work of some ruffian after his traveling money.

NARRATOR: As father of a no-good son himself,

His anxiety rises apace.

YAZAEMON: Hey, young man, young man.

4. The full name of Yazaemon's son Gonta is Gontarō. The villager refers to him as Good-for-Nothing Gonta (Igami no Gonta), switching in mid-phrase to the more polite form of his name out of deference to his father.

NARRATOR: From the still form
No answer to his call.

YAZAEMON: So, he's already breathed his last? What a pity. I wonder where he comes from. Looks a bit old for that sort of hair style.⁵ Ah, all of our meetings in this life, even the chance touching of sleeves, all are foreordained by a previous existence. *(He joins his hands and offers a Buddhist prayer.)*
Namu Amida Butsu, Namu Amida, Namu Amida Butsu.

NARRATOR: So goes his prayer for the dead.

YAZAEMON *(stepping over the body and starting to move off to SL)*:
Ah, such is this transient world that life is uncertain for both old and young. Even seeing such a melancholy sight as this is an admonition from the Buddha. It's important to sow the right seeds in this life if one's to proceed straightaway to a better hereafter.

NARRATOR: Such are his ruminations

As he moves away.

(Yazaemon stops and thinks.)

But then, what thought

Has brought him to a halt?

Suddenly struck by a notion,

He hesitates, stands still.

Slowly, pensively, he returns.

Carefully looking around,

He picks up the unsheathed sword.

Then quickly, in a single stroke,

He cuts off the dead man's head.

A puff blows out the lantern's light,

And in his hand he holds the severed head.

(There is the sound of insects in the bushes, then the deep gong of a bell tolling the late hour. During the narration, Yazaemon hangs his lantern on the pine tree, takes off his cloak and cautiously draws

5. Kokingo has not yet had his pate shaved, part of a boy's initiation into adulthood and usually performed between the ages of eleven and sixteen. Kokingo is about twenty, rather late to be wearing such a hair style. The preceding five years of warfare may have interfered with his undergoing such a ceremony.

Kobingo's sword to him with his foot. Carefully surveying his surroundings, he cuts off the head and wraps it in his cloak, which he then tucks under his right arm.)

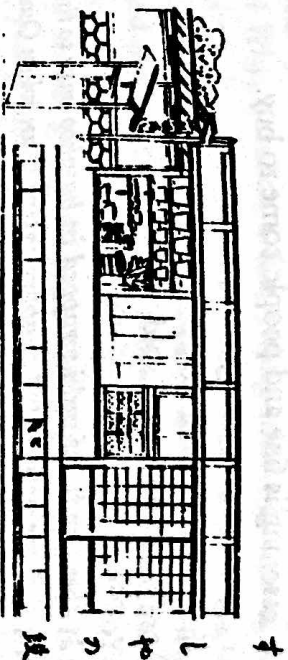
YAZAEMON: For this, much thanks.

NARRATOR: Off he hastens, straight

Along the road to home.

(Tottering in his haste, Yazaemon exits SL.)

SCENE 3 THE SUSHI SHOP



(The scene is the Tsurube Sushi Shop of Yazaemon. The interior of a house extends from SL about two-thirds of the way across the stage, its far SL portion a room enclosed by shoji panels. The other room, open toward the audience, has a curtained doorway at center. At the SR side of the room is an alcove for wooden sushi pails, several of which are on their racks. The house is raised about two feet off the ground in typical Japanese fashion. The entrance to the main room is at SR, where a sign hangs advertising the business. Outside the entry is a simple gateway. The distant background at SR is of green mountains, groves of trees at their bases, and tan-colored rice paddies with pathways along their dikes in the nearer foreground. As the narration begins, Osato and her Mother emerge from the curtained doorway and seat themselves before the rack holding the sushi pails. Osato is dressed in a lavender and

gray checked kimono with red floral patterned sleeve linings, and a red cord to hold back her flowing sleeves. On her head is a large white kerchief. Her Mother is dressed in a brown kimono. Soon after they sit down, villagers come ordering sushi and the women attend to them.)

NARRATOR: When sushi's made by a fair young maid—

So lovely that she makes the flowers bloom

Though spring has yet to come—

The seasoning is fine and people come to buy.

Just right the sushi's tang

At the Tsurube Sushi Shop,

Whose wares are widely sold

In Yoshino's Shimoichi.

(As the Mother hands out sushi wrapped in bamboo bark to the village customers, they are noticeably less appreciative than when Osato serves them.)

While Yazaemon, the master,

Is absent from his sushi shop,

His wife—herself a shrewd shopkeeper—

Tends to the quick-work sushi,¹

While her daughter Osato,

Her sleeves tied back with cords

And over her skirt an apron,

Smiles with such a winsome charm

It draws the customers in

To eat this sushi made of river fish.

The sushi at its pinnacle of taste,

A young girl in the freshness

Of her maidenhood—

Who would wonder that the Tsurube Shop

Enjoys a happy reputation.

As she drives the wedges

Around the wooden covers

1. At the Tsurube shop, sushi is made with seasoned rice packed into a wooden tub. Fish flavored with salt or vinegar is placed on top, then a weighted lid is wedged in place and the fish is left to cure. Sushi made in this way and ready for sale in four or five days is known as *hayazumi*, or quick-work, sushi.

And puts away the sushi tubs,

Osato speaks.

MOTHER: Oh, mother, yesterday father said that Yasuke and I

OSATO: Oh, mother, this evening. Since then, how bright the

would be married this evening. Since then, how bright the

world has become. We'll be man and wife, he said, but it's

dusk and father hasn't come back. I wonder if he was fibbing

to me.

MOTHER: What are you talking about? Why would he tell you a

fib? Why, Yasuke's a fine young man with lots of promise.

Your father brought him back from a pilgrimage to the

Kumano Shrine. He said that he could read the young man's

mind and heart, and he's given him his own name of Yasuke,

your father now calling himself Yazaemon. When he said

that he was going to turn over the business of the shop to

the young man, it meant that he already intended for you to

marry him. Today your father had a sudden call to go to the

village office. It's taking more time than I expected it would,

but there's nobody here we can send to meet him.

OSATO: You're right, that's too bad. Yasuke said there were

several orders for sushi and he didn't think we had enough

tubs to go around, so he went out to get some of the empty

ones. He ought to be returning by now.

NARRATOR: In the midst of their gossiping

A man returns, upon his shoulder

A balance pole supporting empty tubs.

(Yasuke enters from SR with a balance pole holding empty sushi tubs across his shoulder.)

By his look he's quick of wit

And dapper in his dress.

Of whom but such a charming man

Would the poem of old have spoken:

...only you can savor both

The color and the fragrance.²

2. An allusion to a poem (number 38) by Ki no Tomomori from the poetic anthology *Kokin wakas shū* (comp. 905):

With his thick sidelocks—
The kind the young girls love—
Even if made to wear a hat,
He would cut a handsome figure.

Even before he enters the house,
The eagerly waiting Osato
Finds herself ecstatic.

(*She runs to the doorway, and as Yasuke enters she takes one end of the balance pole to help him in.*)

OSATO (sweetly): Oh, Yasuke, you've come back. I've been waiting for you. You're so late. (Coyly) I was worried, thinking that you might have stopped off somewhere.

NARRATOR: She tries to give herself a wifely look.

Predictably, a daughter of a sushi man

Whose trade requires swift work,

It seems she's grown up quickly.

(*Yasuke puts down the pole, enters the room and sits at SR near the doorway. Osato goes and sits next to him.*)

Her mother stifles her amusement.

MOTHER: Pay no attention to her, Master Yasuke. Here in the Yoshino district there's a teaching from the goddess Benzaiten³ that says, "Hold your husband dear, as though he were a god or a Buddha." Jealousy, however, runs deep. But, that old

To whom if not you, my love,
Should I show them,
These flowers of the plum?

For only you can savor both
The color and the fragrance.

Saeki Umetomo, ed., *Kokin waka shū*, III.

The poem is quoted to suggest that Yasuke is a man of finely honed sensibilities. For other translations, see Helen Craig McCullough, *Kokin Wakashū: The First Imperial Anthology of Japanese Poetry*, 21; and Earl Miner, *An Introduction to Japanese Court Poetry*, 10.

3. Benzaiten (also known as Benten) is a female deity of speech and learning often depicted holding a stringed musical instrument.

saying in Yazemon's family—"a melon vine produces no eggplant"—there's really nothing to that.⁴

NARRATOR: So wags her clever honeyed tongue.

YASUKE: All of this . . . well . . . you may not care for what I'm going to say, but now on top of all your many kindnesses you're even going to give me your daughter you prize so highly. (*Growing somewhat impatient.*) I just can't find any way of showing my appreciation. And you're still in the habit of calling me Master Yasuke this and Master Yasuke that, putting "Master" on my name all the time. I get embarrassed about it. Couldn't we be a little more informal, like "How about this, Yasuke?" or "Do it this way, Yasuke?"

(*The Mother holds her head down, Yasuke is embarrassed, and Osato is sullen.*)

MOTHER: Oh, you must forgive me.

YASUKE: Why is that?

MOTHER: Well, you see, the name Yasuke was the one my husband used till recently, and I just couldn't bring myself to say things to him so informally. So, please, let me add "Master" to your name as I'm used to doing.

NARRATOR: Truly, in her voice

There's tenderness of heart
As she seizes on her daughter's presence
To speak of Benzaiten's teaching
To hold a husband dear.

Then, as Osato and Yasuke
Arrange the empty sushi tubs
On the wooden racks,
The elder son of the family,
Good-For-Nothing Gonta,⁵

4. Meaning that ordinary parents will not produce outstanding children. By discounting the saying, the mother is suggesting that even though she and Yazemon may be ordinary, they have a lovely daughter in Osato.

5. Throughout the text, Gonta is usually called *Igami no Gonta*, "Quarrelsome Gonta" or "Ill-tempered Gonta." For simplicity and consistency, however, I have generally called him either Good-for-Nothing Gonta, or simply Gonta.

ACT THREE

Calls out softly from the gate.
(*Gonta enters from SR, both hands drawn inside his kimono. He pops into the room, then pushes the door open with his right foot.*)

GONTA (*entering the house and calling softly*): Mother, mother.

NARRATOR: His entry startles Osato.

(*Tasuke, embarrassed, moves nearer the Mother.*)

OSATO: Oh, it's you again. (*More cordially.*) Ah ... welcome home.

NARRATOR: Nervously, she rubs her hands together.

GONTA (*glaring at Osato*): Well, what are you looking at me so

curiously for? You said welcome back. Why so startled? Well now, you seem ... heh heh ... awfully friendly with Yasuke here. Hey, listen to me Yasuke. I may have been kicked out of the house, but everything here, right down to the ashes under the stove, it's mine. I heard that my caterpillar of an old man had gone off to the village office today, so I just came by to talk over something with my mother. Since it's just between the two of us, get off to the other room.

NARRATOR: He glares about with menace.

Gently saying, "Take your time,"

Yasuke slowly moves away,

And taking Osato with him

They enter the inner room.

(*Tasuke and Osato move off to the inner room, Osato intimidated by Gonta's manner. As they leave, Gonta closes the door with his foot and shoots the bolt home. He then sits and bows to his mother.*)

Left behind, Gonta's mother heaves a sigh.

MOTHER: Have you come again to beg for money while your father's away? You're absolutely incorrigible. I can't do a thing with you! You have a wife and child, but we won't let them come near us because you're so wicked. I hear if we in the village, but your wife and I have never met; even if we passed in the street, we'd be like two blind people as a bat wouldn't recognize each other. People say I'm blind as a bat about you, and I feel I can't hold up my head. You're such an unfilial son! (*She strikes the floor vehemently for emphasis.*)

Scene 3: The Sushi Shop

NARRATOR: As she looks daggers at him,
Gonta sees her displeasure

Will not so quickly soften,
And he changes his approach.

(*He edges up closer to her.*)

GONTA: Look, mother, I didn't come here tonight to beg money from you. I came to say goodbye.

MOTHER: What do you mean?

GONTA: I'm going somewhere a long way from here, and so I just came to wish father and you good health.

NARRATOR: He speaks, head drooping in dejection.

His mother is astonished.

(*She moves closer to him, her concern evident.*)

MOTHER: Where is this far place? Why are you going? What are you going to do there?

NARRATOR: As she fires her questions at him,

Thus begins the deception.

"Now she's hooked,"

Gonta says to himself.

Eyes cast down, he blinks back tears.

(*He takes a small towel and presses its end to his eyes, blubbering like a baby.*)

GONTA: What belongs to a parent belongs to his child, goes the saying, and so I've begged money from you in the past. Until today I haven't taken even a single chopstick that belonged to someone else. And I haven't done a single crooked thing. Maybe it's punishment for being so unfilial. Last night I met up with a terrible robber.

MOTHER: Oh no!

GONTA: And I was robbed of three kanme in silver that I was to give to the government deputy's office for the land tax. I've no excuse to offer, and there's nothing left for me to do, so I've made up my mind to kill myself rather than face the punishment. What a miserable thing to happen to me.

(*He gets up, takes a carving knife from the shelf and thrusts it toward his throat. Noting that his mother is not looking at him, Gonta nudges*

her and repeats the performance. Once she sees what he is doing, she becomes agitated and quickly takes the knife from him.)

NARRATOR: He presses his sleeve to his face

For the tears that fail to flow.

To aid the semblance of grief,

With his tongue he'd lick

The margins of his eyes,

But there, how irksome:

His nose is in the way.

His mother believes his words,

Letting her indulgence

Come before resentment,

And she too rubs her watery eyes.

(Gonta struggles ineffectually to produce some tears. He lifts up his left sleeve to hide the fact that with his right he is wiping saliva on his eye. He peeks furtively at his mother, then rolls on the floor toward the room's entry, pretending to weep convulsively.)

MOTHER: The gods themselves may slip from the path of righteousness, they say. Still, I'm proud of your readiness to give up your life for being robbed of the tax money. When you run into trouble, it's a punishment on your parents. I hope you realize that.

GONTA: Oh, I do, I do realize it. But I'll still probably have to die.

(He gets up on one knee, takes his towel and twists it around his neck, pulling upward as though hanging himself.)

MOTHER: Oh, this is terrible!

(She tries to take the towel from him. He clings to it and rolls onto the floor, face upward.)

GONTA: Yes, yes it is!

(He rolls from side to side, kicking his feet.)

MOTHER: I know what you're like all the time, and you may still be up to one of your tricks, but there's some money we were to leave all of you to divide up when we died. Don't tell your father. Take it, and mend your ways.

(She wipes her eyes once more then goes to the cupboard set into the back wall. Behind her, Gonta waves his arms in obvious joy.)

NARRATOR: Slowly she moves to the cupboard.

An indulgent mother,

Who'd even steal from her husband

For the sake of a son,

She cannot work the easily opened lock.

GONTA *(winning the act of breaking the lock with his pipe case)*:

Here, you can knock it open with the end of my pipe case.

NARRATOR: The unfilial son instructs her

In the tricks to which he's so accustomed.

Later she will smooth things out,

But now, doting on her darling son,

She brings out three silver kamme

That in the end will send

The young man straight to hell.

MOTHER: I'd like to wrap this up in something.

NARRATOR: The mother's foolish fondness

Knows no bounds.

GONTA: Ah, you're a sweetheart.

NARRATOR: . . . says Gonta, his eye upon

An empty sushi tub to hold it.

GONTA: Here, put it in this. *(Holds out a sushi tub.)*

NARRATOR: Thus mother and son

Put silver in a pickling tub,

Perhaps to turn it into golden sushi.

Then on goes the lid, in go the wedges.

MOTHER *(pats Gonta on the shoulder)*: There, that's a good boy.

Now take it away where it won't be seen.

(The sushi tub under his arm, Gonta heads for the doorway.)

NARRATOR: Just as the two feel satisfied

They've managed things so well,

Back comes the father Yazaemon,

Much less doting than his wife.

To the gate he comes in feverish haste,

Stricken by the pangs of conscience.

(Yazaemon enters hurriedly from SR, with the head wrapped in his cloak under his left arm. He pulls down his robe and knocks on the gate.)

YAZAEMON: I'm back. Open up.

NARRATOR: He pounds upon the gate.

GONTA (*surprised, trembling, trying to hide the sushi tub between his legs*): Good heavens, it's the old man!

NARRATOR: He loses his head in utter confusion.

MOTHER (*whispering in Gonta's ear*): Here, put the tub over here.

NARRATOR: He puts the tub among the empty ones.

Then mother and son,

Each with bated breath,

Leave on muffled feet—

She to the adjoining room,

He to the inner portion of the house.

(*Mother goes into the S.I. room and closes the shoji behind her. Gonta disappears into the center curtained doorway.*)

YAZAEMON: Hey, why don't you open up? (*Hammering the gate harder.*)

NARRATOR: So noisy is the pounding,

Yasuke comes running out

And opens up the gate.

Yazaemon enters and peers about,

His face a picture of irritation.

YAZAEMON: What's the matter? Is everyone here asleep? Has all the sushi I ordered been fixed?

NARRATOR: He rattles the tubs about,

Lifting them, opening them.

(*In the process, Yazaemon puts the head wrapped in his cloak into one of the tubs.*)

YAZAEMON: Humph, you haven't made as much progress as I'd have thought. What are my wife and that lazy Osato doing?

YASUKE: Uh, they're inside. I'll go and call them.

NARRATOR: As he moves to go,

Yazaemon holds him back.

Inside the house and out

The old man peers about.

He closes the front gate,

Arranges a seat of honor,

And makes a deep obeisance.

YAZAEMON (*bowing*): I owe a great debt of gratitude to your father the Komatsu Minister, Lord Shigemori.⁶ I wished to find his son, and that is you, my lord Koremori. I came upon you at Kumano Bay. I had you shave your head in the townsman's style, and I brought you to live with us in this house, making you a low-ranking apprentice to keep you from the prying eyes of others. I may have gone too far, and that is a pity, but I have discussed the matter in detail only with my wife. Your wedding ceremony this evening is meant to place my daughter in service at the court of a noble gentleman. I even passed on to you my humble name and called you Yasuke, because the characters used to write that name have the auspicious meaning of "safe at last." I thought others would not know who you were, but today Kajiwara Heizō Kageroki⁷ arrived from Kamakura. He conducted a thoroughgoing investigation, telling me that he thought I was concealing lord Koremori. I was evasive, and I talked myself blue in the face trying to convince him otherwise. That Kageroki, though, he's a sly one, and he just may come around looking for you. But I already have a plan in mind. In any case, as they say, carelessness can lead one to harm. Tomorrow I am going to retire from the shop. You should move to Kaniichi Village.

NARRATOR: Lord Koremori responds.

KOREMORI: Among the countless thousands of those shown favor by my father Shigemori, can there be any so faithful as you? What sort of person were you in the past?

(*Assuming the formal manner of a nobleman, Koremori looks affectionately at Yazaemon.*)

6. Yazaemon refers to Shigemori's title of *Komatsu no Daijū*. The ministry of the Inner Precincts was one of several governmental offices Shigemori held. His apartments in the Heike's headquarters in Rokuhara in Kyoto bore the name Komatsu. He is referred to both as the Minister of the Inner Precincts and as *Komatsu no Daijū*, "The Komatsu Minister."

7. Kageroki (died 1200) was originally from the Heike clan but became one of Yoritomo's most trusted advisers. He is described as "a haughty, vindictive, and unscrupulous man, with a slanderous tongue," and his antagonism to Yoshitsune led to several clashes between the two men during the wars with the Heike. See McCullough, *Toshitsune*, 17–22, 135–37.

YAZAEMON: By your leave, my lord, in the days of the glory of the Heike clan, when Lord Shigemori dispatched a gift of three thousand gold ryō coins to Iwōzan in China,⁸ it was my misfortune, as the official handling the matter, to be robbed of that money in the narrow straits of Ono.⁹ I was on the point of killing myself as an apology, and it was Lord Shigemori who came to my aid. He said to me, "I, who would send Japan's gold off to China, I indeed am the one who robs Japan." And he lamented what he had done. Moreover, he did not blame me at all. Instead, he granted me leave to go. I returned to the place of my parents and took over a sushi business that had a long history. Up until today I have been able to live in comfort and ease, but my son Gonta is a thief and a cheat. I realize that it must be retribution because I have killed living things.¹⁰ Such is my confession, of which I am much ashamed.

NARRATOR: As he speaks, Koremori too
Recalls the days of glories past,
Thinks about his father.
How pitiful indeed the tears
That fall upon his knee.

(Both men touch their sleeves to their eyes. The shoji door of the SL room now opens, revealing Osato inside arranging the bridal bed for herself and Yasuke. She pauses, moves the pillows closer together, pinches and blushes, then moves them a bit closer.)

The daughter Osato comes out,
The bedding in her arms
As she awaits the moon tonight

8. This is apparently based on an incident related in the *Heike monogatari*, in which Shigemori sent 3,000 ryō in gold to the Sung court in China, asking that 1,000 ryō be distributed to the priests at Mount Yu-wang so that services might be conducted for his spirit after his death. See *The Tale of the Heike*, 119.

9. The Ono Strait is located near the modern city of Hiroshima in Japan's Inland Sea. The *Heike monogatari* does not mention the bearer of Shigemori's gold being robbed.

10. A Buddhist inspired sentiment, this may refer to the deaths Yazaemon caused during the preceding years of warfare; or it may refer to the fish he uses in the making of sushi.

When she will welcome
Her handsome husband.
Her father, startled,
Hides his tearful eyes.

(Yazaemon abruptly stands, tightens his sash and moves to SL. Koremori, assuming again his subservient demeanor as Yasuke moves to mori,)

YAZAEMON: Yasuke, be sure, be absolutely sure you don't forget what I told you just now about going to Kamichi Village. You make yourself at home here tonight with Osato. Her mother and I will be in the far room. Best we be out of earshot; you'll be more at ease with us not around, eh.

NARRATOR: He gives a laugh
And heads for the inside of the house.
His daughter is delighted.

OSATO: What a considerate father. With them in the far room, we won't even know they're there. He and mother will be as comfy as two little rice cakes. Oh, ho ho ho, that's silly. We can sleep here. *(She moves close to Koremori, points to the pillows in the SL room and then steps invitingly into the room.)* We can do just as we please and enjoy our bridal bed.

NARRATOR¹¹: She spreads out the bedding.

Lord Koremori feels most keenly
How fate has dealt with him.
He can think only of the sky
Spread above the Capital,
Of Wakaba no Naishi, his wife,
And his young child Rokudai.
He cannot feel elated;
Cheerless are his spirits.
Seeing him sit in such dejection,
Osato moves to him and tries
To enliven him with her coquetry.

OSATO *(seductively)*: See? Oh look . . . Oh, I'm so impatient.

11. From this point on the narrator's lines show a distinctly heightened detachment to Koremori (honorifics, titles, and the like), now that his true identity has become known to the audience.

You're so innocent and inexperienced, I worry about you. The vows we make on the pillow we'll share together will last through two lives, even three.¹² (*Pointing to the pillows.*) See, there they are, side by side. Come, let's go to bed.

NARRATOR: The way she's first to tumble into bed And curl up as though asleep

Seems so like a lover's guise.

Koremori moves toward the pillow.

(*He crawls across the main room to the doorway of the SL room.*)

KOREMORI: Osato, up till now this has been but a temporary affair. If we are to be man and wife, it is a relationship that will join us through two lives. But I have a difficult apology to make. I have been keeping something from you. I have a wife and a child whom I left behind in my home province. The injunction that a faithful wife does not marry a second time holds true also for a husband. Please release me from my pledge to marry you.

NARRATOR: True to his noble lineage

As a son of Shigemori,

Something of his father's noble air

Yet remains within him,

Even in the way he bares his heart.

Wakaba no Naishi knows no more

Of these events than does she of

The unfamiliar road on which she's strayed,

Seeking lodgings where

She may leave young Rokudai

And seek aid for the wounded Kokingo.

(*Naishi, come and lacquered straw hat in hand, enters from SR, with Rokudai in the lead.*)

Thus through a strange affinity

She happens upon this very house.

¹² Buddhism teaches that the ties of man and wife last through the present life and the next one to come. Osato's enthusiasm leads her to hope for yet another existence together.

She knocks upon the gate

And calls out,

"Please, a lodging for the night."

Koremori, thankful for the chance

To escape from Osato's side,

Comes to the front of the house.

He speaks toward the gate,

Whence comes the sound of knocking.

KOREMORI: This is a sushi shop, not an inn.

NARRATOR: Brusque is his response,

But not without civility.

NAISHI: Oh please, I am a woman traveling with a young child.

I beg you lodging for the night.

NARRATOR: About to refuse and send her on her way,

Koremori pushes open the gate.

There in the shadowy moonlight

He spies Naishi and Rokudai.

A startled gasp; he shuts the gate

And looks about inside.

Troubled at what Osato must think,

Back he goes on careful feet and peers,

But she seems already wrapped in dreams.

Outside the gate Naishi is mystified.

NAISHI: That person just now, I thought somehow he bore a resemblance to my husband. But, his dress, the way his head was shaved, like a servant. Surely it wasn't...

(*Inside, Koremori tiptoes to the curtained doorway at center, peers in, then quietly moves back to the gate.*)

NARRATOR: As Naishi mulls the matter in her mind,

Again the gate draws open,

And there stands Koremori.

KOREMORI: My wife, is it Naishi? And Rokudai?

NAISHI: Oh! It is my husband after all!

ROKUDAI (*turning to Koremori*): Is it father?

NAISHI (*going to Koremori and embracing him*): Oh, how we've missed you! (*Koremori embraces them both.*)

NARRATOR: They cling to one another.

No words are possible,

All they can do is weep.

KOREMORI: Now now, come inside.

NARRATOR: Quietly, they follow him in.

(*Koremori leads them inside the house. Naishi and Rokudai sit at SL as Koremori sits at SR.*)

KOREMORI: How strange to be seeing you on this very night, when I was thinking especially of the time when we lived in the Capital and wondering if my wife and child were safe. But, who told you I was here? I've no idea how you got all the way here with no one to help you.

NARRATOR: To his questions, Lady Naishi responds.

NAISHI: After we parted in the Capital, I worried about what happened in the battles at Suma¹³ and Yashima. After hearing that the whole Heike clan had perished, I was left hiding in Saga with nothing to do but weep. Then someone said that you might be somewhere around Mount Kōya, so Kōkingo came with us and we set out to find where you were. We ran into a search party from Kamakura, and I parted from Kōkingo after he was wounded. (*Weeps.*) Now, with no one to rely on and no strength left in me, oh how happy I am that I've found you. But Koremori, you are a Middle Imperial Attendant of the Third Rank. Why do you look like this—sleeveless jacket, your head shaved on top?

(*She goes to him, puts her hand on his shoulder, then sinks in tears at his knee.*)

NARRATOR: She clings to him
And chokes upon her tears,
As though all is past endurance.
Koremori, in shame,
Puts hand to head and sleeve to face,
And he too is consumed with grief.

¹³. Suma refers to the famous battle at Ichi no Tani. See *The Tale of the Heike*, 310–12.

Yet even as she weeps,
Naishi spies the sleeping Osato.

(*Naishi draws back from Koremori.*)

NAISHI: A young girl asleep, and two pillows there. (*Speaking rapidly and accusingly.*) Oh, of course, she must be an attendant to your comforts. (*Osato hears and quickly tries to hide the pillow beneath the covers.*) Living such a life of ease here, and yet you still long for the Capital, eh? You might have sent me some tidings, but instead you've cast me aside. Oh, how cruel.

NARRATOR: Bitter are her words.

KOREMORI: Oh no, I thought of writing to you, but I was afraid the letter might go astray. But more to the point is the master of this house, Yazaemon. To repay his debt of gratitude to my father Shigemori, he has aided me, and he and his wife have since then repeatedly shown me many kindnesses. I wished to express my own thanks to them, and so I engaged in a romance with their daughter. I see now that I have made an inconsiderate mistake. The gratitude I meant to repay has, on the contrary, done harm. I made passing pledges to the girl, but Yazaemon sealed my lips and would not let me tell her about myself. He said that a woman in her jealousy might reveal to others matters of importance. My heart was not in this relationship. I have done it all out of an obligation to her parents.

NARRATOR: As he speaks—can it be because
The sleeping girl cannot bear it?—
Osato breaks into heart-rending sobs.

(*Osato burrows down under the bedclothes, covering her head. The convulsive movements of the covers show that she is weeping.*)

NAISHI: Oh, what's that?

NARRATOR: The startled Naishi grabs Rokudai,

And is about to flee.

OSATO: No, please wait.

NARRATOR: Out runs the sobbing Osato.

(*Osato throws off the covers and runs into the room.*)

ACT THREE

OSATO: First, please come here.
(Osato has Koremori move over to his wife and child at SL. Then he goes to SR and kneels and bows to them.)

NARRATOR: She bids Naishi and the young lord
To assume the honored seat.

OSATO: I am Osato, the daughter in this house. You must think me capricious and hateful, and I ask your forgiveness.

(At this point, Osato's monologue becomes song.)
Around last year's spring,
To this village so remote
It rests amid tall grass,
There came a gentleman (bows to Koremori)
Of beauty seldom seen,
Like someone from a painting.
To this young girl's heart,
Who knew him not as Koremori,
How gentle was he, how sweet;
And from this my affection grew.

(Hands inside her long sleeves, she claps them together in joy.)

My father told me nothing (weeps).

Even mother never dreamed the truth.

Had I but been told,

Though I might have died

In yearning for him,

Think you that the daughter

Of a lowly sushi shop

Would presume to love so fine a man,

One who attends the nobles of the court—

Those who dwell above the clouds?

(She hides her face in her sleeve.)

To spend the rest of my life

With this handsome gentleman—

On that I had set my heart.

But now our vow of love,

A love to last beyond this life,

Is a thing that may not be.

Scene 3: The Sushi Shop

177

(Addressing Koremori:)
You say you pledged yourself
Out of duty to my parents.
What a heartless thing!

For in your love
I had placed my trust.

NARRATOR: She sinks down, engulfed in tears,
Her body racked by sobbing.
Lord Koremori is at a loss;

And Naishi, in her sympathy,

Sheds tears that seek forgiveness.

Yet, ere the grieving tears have dried,

In rushes a village officer

To pound upon the gate.

(Officer enters from SR.)

OFFICER: See here, Master Kajiwara has come. Clean up this place!

NARRATOR: He spits out the words and leaves.

For those within the house,

In an instant weeping eyes are dry,

As suddenly all are startled

And wonder what is afoot.

Quickly Osato remembers something

And speaks excitedly.

OSATO (to Koremori): Oh quickly, you're to go to father's retirement villa in Kannichi Village.

KOREMORI: You're right. Yazaemon reminded me of that. But now the final fate of the Heike has been sealed. I'll handle the investigating party and show them a manly death as I rip my belly open.

(He grabs a knife carried by Rokutai.)

NARRATOR: As he starts to prepare himself,

Naishi cries out in grief.

NAISHI: Wait! Think of this child here, so lovely in his youth. Quickly, we must get out of here.

ACT THREE

NARRATOR: She seizes him against his will
And starts to lead him off.

Koremori's heart is also with the child,
And, loath to part with him,
He also leaves, as in the balance

Still hangs his fate.

(Koremori, Naishi, and Rokudai go out into the courtyard at center stage and exit SR. At this point there is usually a change of narrator and his samisen accompanist.)

Now from the back door—

Perhaps he's heard everything—

Good-For-Nothing Gonta prances in.

(Stripped to the waist, Gonta enters through the center curtained doorway.)

GONTA *(to Osato)*: There's a warrant out for Naishi and Rokudai
and that Koremori, alias Yasuke. I'm turning them all in.

NARRATOR: He tucks the hem of his robe
Into his sash and starts off.

OSATO: Wait!

NARRATOR: Osato grabs hold of him.

OSATO: Gonta, this is the plea of my life. Please, let them go.

NARRATOR: She begs, but he will not listen,

And flings her aside.

GONTA: This is a big thing, worth a lot of money to me. Don't
get in my way!

NARRATOR: Osato claws at him,

But he kicks her down

And sends her flying.

He grabs the sushi tub

Into which he'd placed the money.

GONTA: Oh, mustn't forget this.

NARRATOR: Then hard upon his victim's heels

He dashes in pursuit.

(In muscular movements, Gonta runs out at SR.)

OSATO *(running to the curtained doorway)*: Oh, father, mother,
father, mother!

Scene 3: The Sushi Shop

NARRATOR: At her frenzied summons,
In rush Yazaemon and his wife.

(Yazaemon enters from the curtained doorway, the Mother from the

SL room.)

MOTHER: What's happened?

OSATO: Oh, listen to me! Koremori's wife and son wandered in
here from the Capital. We were in the midst of a long talk
when we heard that a search party had come. I had them run
off to Kamiichi, but—oh what a wretch he is!—Gonta had
been listening. He said he was either going to kill them or
capture them for a reward. And just now he ran off after
them!

NARRATOR: Yazaemon is dumbfounded.

YAZAEMON: This is terrible!

(He pulls down his robe from his right shoulder to free his sword arm, tucks the hem of his skirts into his sash at his back. He grabs a short sword and thrusts that into the sash, then he leaves the house and heads off toward SR.)

NARRATOR: Into his sash he thrusts his sword,
Ever at hand in its crimson scabbard.

As he starts to dash away,

Shouts come from outside.

(To the sound of a drum, four soldiers enter SR carrying lanterns emblazoned with crests and hung on tall poles.)

SOLDIERS: Hai, hai, hai!

NARRATOR: Truncheons in hand,

And bearing lanterns painted

With an arrow fletching crest,¹⁴

The men of Kajiwara Kagetoki

Swarm in and block the way.

(As Kajiwara also enters from SR, Yazaemon bumps into him.)

KAJIWARA: Yaa, you old gaffer, where do you think you're
going? Think I'd let you get away?

¹⁴ Kajiwara Kagetoki's family crest was a herringbone pattern of arrow fletching.

(Yazaemon runs this way and that trying to escape, each time blocked by the soldiers. Again he runs into Kajiwara, then falls down, breathing heavily.)

NARRATOR: Surrounded and surprised,

Worried what will happen next

Yet unable to escape,

Yazaemon squirms in agony,

Heart pounding like a fire alarm,

For now, it seems, his time has come.

KAJIWARA: Yaaa, insolent wretch! When I questioned you today about Koremori, you dodged about saying you had no idea where he was, knew nothing about him. I let you go home so I could break in on you when you weren't expecting me. We know that Koremori is hidden in this house, because someone from here informed the authorities. Right away I sent off a dispatch to Kamakura, and those who'll take him will be here in short order. If there are any slip-ups, I'm not going to escape punishment myself. So, are you going to hand over his head, or are you going to put up a fight? Let's have an answer!

(He glares down at Yazaemon, who cringes on the ground in dejection.)

NARRATOR: Thus pressed, resistance is hopeless.

Yazaemon comes to a decision.

(Yazaemon stands, removes the towel tied about his head and squirms his shoulders.)

YAZAEMON: I see. Yes, I did tell you he wasn't hiding here, but so forceful was your interrogation that I knew I couldn't possibly keep him hidden. I've already cut off his head, and now I'll show it to you. This way please.

(Yazaemon leads Kajiwara into the house, where he sits on a stool at SL. Osoto and her Mother watch anxiously from the center curtained doorway.)

NARRATOR: As Kajiwara follows him inside,

Mother and daughter are anxious

As to what will now unfold.

Yazaemon picks up

One of the sushi tubs.

Then, slowly he comes back

And places it in the middle of the room.

YAZAEMON *(to Kajiwara)*: Here is the head of Koremori. Please take it.

NARRATOR: He is about to remove the lid
When his wife comes running in
And stays his hand.

MOTHER: Oh wait! I put something rather important in that tub. What am I going to do if you open it?

YAZAEMON: Humpf, I don't know. A little while ago I put the head of Lord Koremori in here.

MOTHER: No no no! There's something in here I can't let you see!

NARRATOR: She pulls the tub to herself,
Yazaemon pulls it back.

YAZAEMON: Huh, I don't know what you're talking about,
so...

MOTHER: It's just because you don't know...

NARRATOR: His wife, thinking of the money,

Struggles with her husband,

Till finally Kajiwara intervenes.

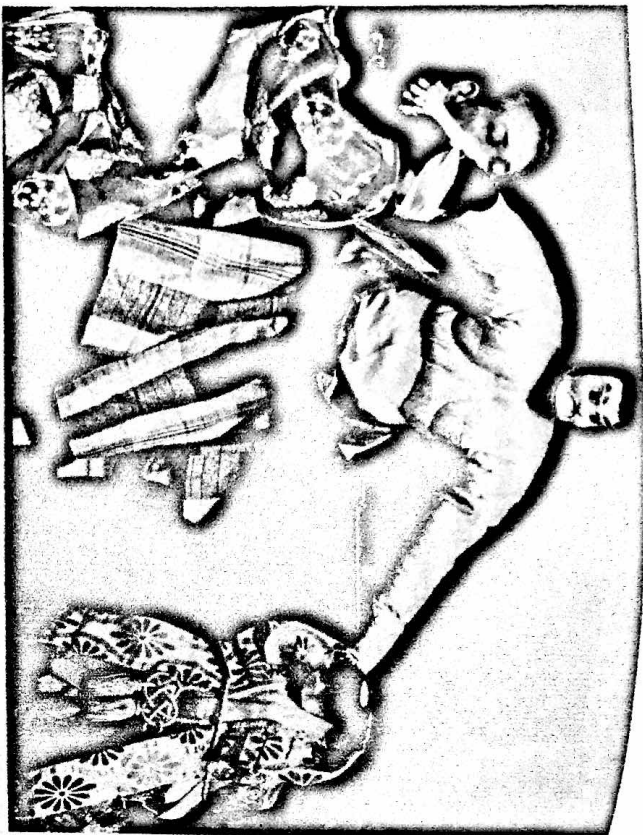
KAJIWARA: They've arranged all of this in advance to evade me.
Bind them! Tie them up!

SOLDIERS: We've got you!
(As Kajiwara waves his war fan, the soldiers run out, brandishing their truncheons. The Mother moves back to the curtained doorway.)

NARRATOR: The soldiers surround Yazaemon.

Just then a voice calls out.

(Gonta, still stripped to the waist, enters from SR, leading by a rope a woman and a child. They are bound with their hands behind them and gagged in a manner that partially obscures their faces. Gonta pulls them in roughly.)



NARRATOR: Solemnly, the pugnacious Gonta

Leads in Rokudai and Naishi.

Both trussed up like monkeys.

He drags them in so roughly

Their feet hardly touch the ground. . .

(Act 3, scene 3)

GONTA: I, the one people call Good-For-Nothing Gonta, I've caught both Koremori and his wife, and the brat too. These here I've taken alive; I killed the other.

NARRATOR: Yazaemon is stunned.

His wife and daughter stand transfixed,

Their minds in a frenzy.

Solemnly, the pugnacious Gonta

Leads in Rokudai and Naishi,

Both trussed up like monkeys.

He drags them in so roughly

Their feet hardly touch the ground,

Then forces them to squat

As though awaiting an audience.

GONTA: My liar of a father brought Koremori here from Kumanobay. On the road back he had him shave his head to make him look like a young whippersnapper, then changed his name to Yasuke. The other day the old man chose the damn strumpet-chaser to be his son-in-law. Koremori knew he'd be disgraced if I took him alive, and he turned out to be a tougher customer than I thought. But I got some villagers to help me and we finally struck him down. I cut off his head and brought it with me. Here, make your inspection.

(He takes the sushi tub, pulls out Kokingo's head and moves toward Kajiwara. As he does so, Yazaemon makes a move to intercept him. Gonta draws back, and Yazaemon is clearly hesitant as to what to do. Two soldiers take Yazaemon away through the center curtained doorway.)

NARRATOR: He presents the severed head.

(Gonta places the head before Kajiwara. He then unties the towel around his head and begins elaborately wiping the sweat from his face and shoulders and back.)

KAJIWARA: Ah, I see. I knew about the Yasuke business and the shaven head, but I didn't say anything earlier so as not to provoke any suspicions by that Yazaemon fellow. From what has reached my ears about you, Gonta, I understand that you're a bad one. To your superiors, however, you are loyal. You've captured Naishi and Rokudai. Well done, well done. (Gonta, sitting between his prisoners and bowing, steals a peek at Kajiwara, then with his arms on the backs of the woman and child he closes his eyes, momentarily overcome with emotion. Kajiwara looks over his fan at the woman.) Hah, she's a good looking one. Right off she reminds me of the Dreamfield Deer.¹⁵ So, you've caught the doe and the fawn. A splendid

15. The reference is to a story in the eighth-century Japanese history *Nihongi* (or *Nihon shoki*) in which a man goes to sleep on the moor at Toga. Two deer, a male and a female, lie down beside him. The male deer tells the female of a dream he has had, and the female interprets it as a portent that he will die. At dawn the following morning, the male deer is killed by a hunter. From this arose the saying, "Even a belling deer relies on the interpretation of dreams." See W. G.

piece of work. As a reward to you, I'll spare the life of your father Yazaemon.

GONTA: Ah . . . no no, wait. I didn't do all this hoping to spare my father's life.

KAJIWARA: Then, even if your father's life is forfeit, you still want a reward?

GONTA: What becomes of him is something between the two of you. As for me, well . . . I'd like some money.

KAJIWARA: Ha ha ha ha ha. Well, you're an agreeable type to deal with. You'll get your reward.

NARRATOR: He removes the cloak he wears

And gives it to Gonta,
But Gonta's face is sullen.

(Kajiwara throws the cloak to Gonta. Gonta is nonplused.)

KAJIWARA: Look here, that cloak belonged to Lord Yoritomo. Bring it to Kamakura anytime and you can exchange it for money. That'll be your tally to prove you're to get the reward.

(Gonta brightens.)

NARRATOR: At this, Gonta lifts the cloak
To his head in thanks.

GONTA: I've done it, I've done it! There's a lot of hoodwinking going on nowadays, but this way no one can cheat me out of the reward! Ah, you're really clever. *(Delighted, Gonta stands up, puts on the cloak and struts about the room.)*

NARRATOR: In exchange, he hands over

The prisoners in their bonds.
Kajiwara accepts them,

And has the head returned to the tub.

KAJIWARA: Well then, Gonta, for the time being I'll leave Yazaemon and the rest of his family in your hands.

GONTA: Oh, you don't have to worry about them. I won't let 'em budge an inch!

KAJIWARA: You're an admirable fellow.

NARRATOR: Singing Gonta's praises,
Kajiwara picks up the prisoners' rope

And leaves.

(Kajiwara pulls the prisoners as they exit SR. Gonta removes the cloak.)

GONTA *(calling after Kajiwara)*: Next comes my reward of money.
Don't forget!

(Yazaemon peeks out from the curtained doorway, then ducks back inside the curtain.)

NARRATOR: As Gonta bids Kajiwara farewell,

Yazaemon sees an instant
When Gonta's off his guard.

(Yazaemon re-emerges from the curtained doorway, his outer robe pulled down from both shoulders, a drawn sword in his right hand.)

Nursing a bitter hate,
He plunges his rancorous blade
Into his son.

Back topples Gonta,
His face to the sky.

(Gonta falls backward, his hair now loosened to fly about his head. Osato and her Mother rush out from the curtained doorway and run to Gonta.)

Mother and daughter, as they warch,
Utter an astonished cry.
Hateful though her son may be,

Instinctively the mother runs to him.

MOTHER: You know it's heaven's punishment! You realize your guilt as an unfilial child!

NARRATOR: She censures him, but not before

The tears have started to fall,
And she collapses sobbing away.

But not Yazaemon,

Who gnashes his teeth in rage.

YAZAEMON *(still holding the sword thrust into Gonta's belly)*: Don't cry for him, wife! What are you howling about? If I let this

Aston, tr., *Nihongi*, 289-90. Introduction of the reference here seems to have no relevance other than to introduce the metaphors of doe and fawn that follow.

kind of wretch live, saying he was pitious or dear to me, why he'd be an affliction to the whole world! I ordered you *never* to let him set foot in here, and yet you let him in. How could he kill our precious, precious Koremori, and hand over Lady Naishi and young Rokudai to Kanakura? Oh, it . . . it . . . it sends me into a rage, a rage! I weep for them, it t-t-tears at my breast! In all the three thousand Buddha worlds,¹⁶ I must be the only father who would kill his own son. (*Ironically*) You, Gonta, must be the bringer of retribution on me for my sins in another life. Bravo! You've done your vile work well!

NARRATOR: Fiercely he grips the handle

Of the naked sword,

As though to crush it.

He gouges the sword in Gonta's wound,

But in his heart are tears.

Though crooked to the heart,

Gonta pushes back the blade.

GONTA (*slowly, in great pain*): Father.

YAZAEMON (*irritably*): What is it?

GONTA (*still painfully*): It was . . . beyond your power . . . alone

. . . to save Koremori.

YAZAEMON: Don't say that! As luck would have it, today I found at the side of the crossroad a man who had died of his wounds. His head was to be a perfect substitute for Koremori's head, so I cut it off and brought it home and hid it in this tub here. (*He takes the tub from the rack holding others*) Look here, I'll show it to you.

NARRATOR: He takes the sushi tub,

Opens it, (*turning it upside down*)

And out tumbles

Three kamme in silver.

YAZAEMON: What! This is money! What's going on here?

16. That is, all of the Buddha worlds in the universe.

NARRATOR: He stands there dumbfounded.
The wounded Gonta gazes at his father.

GONTA: You were in a terrible situation, father. I'm so rotten to the core that you had no one to discuss matters with. You had the wrong idea. You were in danger for taking that young man's head and handing it over to the Kanakura men just as it was, forelock and all.¹⁷ Would a samurai like Kajiwara come here with an armed force without knowing that you'd given Koremori the name Yasuke and made him look like a young townsman? The fact that he didn't say anything about it shows just how clever he was. That money there that I stole, I was going to give it to Koremori and his wife for their traveling expenses. Thinking that the heavier sushi tub had the money in it, I took the wrong one, and when I opened it, there was a severed head inside. I was astonished, for it was precisely the head you had put there in the first place. But luckily I was able to shave the top of the head and place it back in the tub.

YAZAEMON: You're still just as wicked. Why did you tie up Lady Naishi and her son and hand them over to the Kanakura authorities?

GONTA (*slowly, painfully*): Those two who appeared here, . . . they were . . . my wife and . . . my son.

YAZAEMON: Then . . . then, where are Koremori and his wife, and their son?

GONTA: Oh, I'll show them to you.

NARRATOR: He draws from his sleeve

A toy whistle, and blows it.

(*Laboriously, Gonta blows the whistle several times.*)

17. That is, with the hair on the top of the head still in place and pulled back, together with the sidelocks, into a kind of long chignon, which is then waxed and curved back over the top of the head. The townsman hairstyle, affected as a disguise by Yasuke/Koremori in this scene, involves shaving the top of the head, the waxed chignon being formed by pulling back only the remaining sidelocks, which are then led forward across the shaven pate.

At the sound, in rushes Lord Koremori.
With him comes Lady Naishi,
Dressed in the clothes
Of a tea serving maid

And leading her son by the hand.

(They enter from SR. Naishi and Rokudai are, respectively, dressed in the clothes of Kosen and Zenta.)

KOREMORI: To you, Yazaemon, and to your wife and Gonta, we offer our than- . . . Oh, Gonta's been wounded!

OSATO *(to Koremori and his family)*: You're all right?

NARRATOR: She is stunned to see them,

But in an instant

All her joy vanishes.

Gonta's mother clings to her son in grief.

MOTHER *(weeping)*: If you possessed such an upright character as this, why did you behave so that you were condemned and shunned by everyone? If everything had been as it should be, surely your father would never have so rashly inflicted this wound on you. How cruelly things have turned out!

NARRATOR: She sobs convulsively

And cries out her lament.

Gonta speaks.

GONTA *(in pain)*: No need to mourn . . . no need. If everything had been as father had planned, Kajiwara would never have gone off thinking that head was genuine. If he'd still had some doubt, would he have spared father's life as a reward to me? And if I'd merely said thank you for that, he'd have thought at once to investigate everything more fully. Because I bickered with him about the reward, he became careless. Calamity, goes the proverb, after three years becomes good fortune. When you severed all ties with me because of my wickedness, I just naturally became taken up with gambling. Today, when I cheated this lady here out of twenty ryō, I looked into her baggage and saw a picture of a lofty person due great reverence. It was a portrait drawn from life of the very face of Yasuke. I couldn't understand, and so on a plot

of begging money from mother, I got into the house and concealed myself. I heard all about the difficulties that had plagued Lord Koremori. If I don't change my evil ways this time, I thought to myself, then there probably will never come a time when I can get back into father's good graces. I made a complete change behind this mask of evil. I had a head to substitute for that of Koremori, but there was no one to take the place of Naishi and young Rokudai. I was at a loss what to do, when my wife Kosen came in with our boy. She said to me, "You've been disowned by your father. And then there's such a thing as loyalty to a former master. Why are you so distraught? Use me and Zenta," she said, "as a means to get around the problem." Then my son said to me, "Send mother together with me." I tried and I tried to tie them up with a rope, but . . . I just couldn't do it. I'd tie a knot, and it would just slip loose. By what karma should so cantankerous a person as I have such an upstanding son? And then I wept. I tied them up, and then I wept more. When I had their hands tied behind them, I wept tears of blood, unable to bear my heart of a demon, my black and wicked heart. And when my sweet, my pitiful wife also cried out in grief, I was in such agony I could have coughed up blood.

(Throughout Gonta's long monologue, his words are frequently interrupted by gasps of pain and fits of weeping as he reveals his tragic dilemma.)

NARRATOR: Thus he speaks,

Bearing up under the strain.

YAZAEMON *(weeping bitterly)*: I didn't understand, Gonta, I didn't understand! If you had such agonizing grief, why didn't you tell us? In all this wide world, I have only one daughter-in-law, only one little grandchild. When children were playing together in a group, and I would think to ask them if there was a child around with a rather sinister look about him like his father, I'd say, "Hey children, is Gonta's little boy here?" The youngsters would ask me, "What Gonta are you talking

about? What's his other name?" I just couldn't bring myself to tell them that he's called Good-For-Nothing Gonta. Since the boy's the child of such a wastrel, I'd think that the children would all treat him as an outcast, and then I'd detest Gonta all the more for that. If only you'd reformed half a year ago as you have now! Isn't that so, Mother?

MOTHER: Oh, Father, we could have known our daughter-in-law and our grandchild. But now it's too late.

YAZAEMON: That's the very thing I regret . . . but it's too late.

NARRATOR: Choked with tears

And trembling with emotion,

He crumples to the floor.

Throughout the telling,

Naishi has wept in sadness,

And Lord Koremori is overcome,

As heavy hangs his heart.

KOREMORI: You may grieve, Yazaemon, but destiny ordains that we meet only to part, that we die having never met. The severed head you brought was that of Shunme no Kokingo, a retainer of long standing to me who was accompanying Naishi. If he fulfilled his loyalties only slightly in life, his faithful service has proved so much greater in death. Here too, how strange are the workings of fate.

YAZAEMON: But then, if that is so, everything that has happened has been the doing of that armed force from Kamakura.

KOREMORI: What you say is true. It is the inhumanity that has spread abroad under the power of that General of the Right Guards Yoritomo.¹⁸ How it infuriates me that I cannot do away with him with a stroke of my sword!

NARRATOR: Wrath mingles with his tears.

YAZAEMON: Ah, how right you are.

NARRATOR: Yazaemon picks up the cloak

Left by Kajiwara.

YAZAEMON: This cloak here, he said it used to be Yoritomo's,

18. One of several honorary titles Yoritomo held.

and he left it to serve as a reward. Even if I tore it to tiny shreds they could not number all the members of your clan who died. But, as an offering gesture to them, let us each tear it once. Here, my lord.

NARRATOR: He hands the cloak to Koremori.

KOREMORI (*eying the cloak*): Wait, did he say this was Yoritomo's cloak? Then we will follow the example of Yu Jang of China's ancient Chin Dynasty, and by tearing this cloak we will dispel the rancor of my clan.¹⁹

NARRATOR: He grasps his short sword,

Then takes the cloak and lifts it up.

On the back he sees what seems

To be the last lines of two poems.

KOREMORI (*reading the poem*):

"Do you yearn for that which lies within?"

"Indeed, I yearn for that which lies within."

I wonder why these two lines are written side by side. There was a poem sent to the poetess Komachi that runs like this:

Though the cloud-pent realm

Where once you dwelled

Has altered not since long ago;

The jeweled hangings once you knew—

Do you yearn for that which lies within?

And everyone knows of her answering verse.²⁰ Strange that these poems should be given such importance here. But,

19. Yu Jang was a minister in the Chin state in the fifth and sixth century B.C. When his master was slain by viscount Hsiang of the Chao state, Yu Jang vowed revenge. He made several attempts upon the viscount, but was discovered each time. On the last attempt he asked that the viscount allow him to ease his conscience by merely piercing the viscount's coat with his sword. The viscount generously assented. After Yu Jang had run his dagger through the coat, he stabbed himself and died. See Giles, *A Chinese Biographical Dictionary*, 97-98.

20. The poem comes from the Nô play *Onna Komachi* (The Parrot Komachi), in which a messenger brings a poem to the famed and once beautiful Ono no Komachi (ninth century) from the retired Emperor Yôzei. The poem alludes to her earlier life at court (whose members were called "dwellers above the

Kajiwara is a warrior who has a rather special interest in poetry. The line "Do you yearn for that which lies within?" must be linked to the idea "Indeed, I yearn for that which lies within," and he must mean within the seams of that cloak.

NARRATOR: He cuts and loosens

The thread about the neck,

And lo! what tumbles out before him:

A cassock and a stole

For a Buddhist priest.

Even a rosary lies concealed within.

KOREMORI: What can this be?

YAZAEMON: Why on earth . . . ?

NARRATOR: Both men are amazed;

Then Lord Koremori speaks.

KOREMORI: Ah, that must be it. Long ago at the time of the Hōgen and the Heiji disturbances, my father Shigemori and the nun Ike no Zenni arranged between themselves that Yoritomo, then sentenced to death, be exiled instead to Iō.²¹ As payment of that debt of gratitude, Yoritomo now spares Koremori's life and tells him to enter the priesthood. Thus that parrot poem bespeaks a debt repaid.²² Ah, now I see: though he is my enemy, Yoritomo is a splendid general. More than "that which lies within the jeweled hangings,"²³ something gracious and elegant lies within Yoritomo's heart.

clouds"). Komachi replies with the same poem, changing only a single syllable of the original, thus altering the final line from "Do you yearn for that which lies within?" to "Indeed, I yearn for that which lies within." See Nomura, *Yōkyōku shū*, 1:352-57.

21. In the Hōgen insurrection (1156) and the Heiji insurrection (1159-60) the Genji clan was defeated by the Heike, leading to two decades of Heike preeminence. During the latter disturbance it was the nun Ike no Zenni's plea to clan leader Taira Shigemori (Koremori's father) that led him to spare Yoritomo's life and exile him to the town of Iō (in present-day Shizuoka prefecture). Ike no Zenni was the widow of Heike leader Taira no Tadamori (1095-1153).

22. This is a play on similar sounding words: *omiyagashi*, repaying by parrotting the original speaker's words; and *omiyashi*, the repayment of a debt of gratitude.

23. Yet another play upon the words of Komachi's poem quoted earlier.

NARRATOR: He takes up the cloak.

NARRATOR: (*raising the cloak to his forehead in respect*): In truth, I owe much to my father Shigemori.

NARRATOR: Fitting indeed it is that he should show reverence to this robe.

All those around him are now consumed

By tears of joy. The wounded Gonta

Crawls forth and edges close.

GONTA: I just wasn't smart enough. I thought I had tricked Kajiwara, but he knew everything. As I think about it, up till now I'm the one who's done all the cheating. How wretched that this has finally led to being cheated myself . . . cheated out of my own life.

NARRATOR: In this last lament

Comes the ending of his days.

KOREMORI: By denying the Buddha up till now, merely paying lip service to his teachings, I have not escaped the painful cycles of birth, death and rebirth. Now is the time to break away from that. (*He picks up his short sword.*)

NARRATOR: With a single stroke

He cuts off his topknot of hair.²⁴

Naishi, Rokudai, and Osato

Rush forward and cling to him.

OSATO: I will become a nun and accompany you. Please, let me be in your service.

NARRATOR: They entreat him, but Koremori

Rejects their pleas

And brushes all aside.

KOREMORI: Naishi, you are to take Rokudai to Takao and seek protection for him from the priest Mongaku.²⁵ And Osato, it is important that you take your brother's place and be a filial child to your parents.

24. The symbolic gesture of receiving the tonsure and entering the Buddhist priesthood.

25. Takao is now part of the city of Kyoto. Mongaku (died in the early thirteenth century) was a priest of the Shingon sect, an impetuous man with a fundamentalist religious bent. Exiled after an affront to the Emperor Goshira-

NARRATOR: As he starts to go, Yazaemon speaks up.

YAZAEMON: Accompanying Lady Naishi is a task this old man will undertake.

NARRATOR: As each prepares for a journey, Yazaemon's wife attends her dying son.

MOTHER: Oh Father, how cold-hearted you are. Your son is near death. Look upon him one last time.

NARRATOR: Yazaemon comes to a halt and weeps.

YAZAEMON (*overwrought*): In this life I have killed my own flesh and blood son. How can I look upon him a final time? If I see him dead before me, how can I walk a single step? When I could do nothing while breath was in him, what can I do to help him now? And you, the only person I can rely on, you hold me back. You ask too much.

NARRATOR: As the father speaks,

He bursts into tears;

And weeping even more,

The mother and her daughter.

How wretched, how piteous,

Thinks Koremori, as about his neck

He places the simple stole

And takes in hand the Buddhist robe.

As a parting gift

He bears a holy scripture

Telling of the highest Buddha wisdom

To cast aside delusion

And open wide the enlightened way.

Now the departure from the gateway:

Naishi and Rokudai to Takao,

Koremori bound for Takano²⁶—

kawa, he came into contact with Yoritomo, also in exile, and urged him to rebel against Heike rule. Later in his life, Mongaku was repeatedly banished to remote islands, eventually dying in exile. For the *Heike monogatari* account of Mongaku, see *The Tale of the Heike*, 178–84.

26. Another reading for the characters of Mount Kōya, used here in keeping with the metric rhythm of the lines.

A wife and husband now
Must go their separate ways;

A parent and a child
Must say their last goodbye.

(*Gonta tries to bring his hands together in prayer, but they miss each other. Unable to bear it, Yazaemon runs to him. Osato and her mother lift Gonta's crumpled body up as a farewell to his father.*)

The farewell to a dying son,

Face next to face—

Never shall their yearning

For each other end.

(*Koremori at SL and Naishi at SR both offer their prayers for Gonta.*)

And remaining still in Yoshino,

Along the road to Yamato,

This celebrated sushi shop

Of Koremori-Yasuke.

In this village of flowers,

Where cherry blossoms flourish still,

It manifests itself in all its fame.

(*The clappers close the act as Koremori at SL faces forward in grief, Yazaemon at SR tearfully takes the hands of Naishi and Rokudai, and within the room Osato and her mother cling sorrowfully to the body of the dead Gonta.*)