

behind them, the warriors pushed their way through the long grass, and the moonlight glinting on their armor made them look like stars as they lined up in the temple garden. Kiyonosuke told the men they were going back to Minamoto's mansion, and Mitsuue stepped lightly up into his saddle and began to ride off through the dew-wet grass. Early morning mist rose everywhere, and he wandered here and there, his mind lost and troubled by his deep karmic ties to Tasogare, which bound both of them as tightly together as the reins he held in his hands. Only when the sky grew light was he able to turn away from his sorrow and spur his horse quickly on toward his mansion in Saga.

[Nise Murasaki *inaka Genji*, SNKBT 88: 150–174, translated by Chris Dale] *inaka*

Chapter 21

GHOSTS AND NINETEENTH-CENTURY KABUKI

Kabuki's focus on evil was one of its characteristics in the nineteenth century, especially in the work of Tsuruya Nanboku, who—along with Chikamasa, Namiki Sōsuke (Senryū), and Mokuami—was one of the leading kabuki-ōruri playwrights of the early modern period. In contrast to earlier plays in which the evil male character is the opposite of the good male character and thus basically a foil for the hero, in Nanboku's plays the evil male character is the protagonist and is simultaneously attractive and repulsive, erotic and loathsome. During this period as well, two new evil characters were created in kabuki, the "poisonous wife" (*dokufu*) and the "evil woman" (*akuba*), both *omigata* roles (a male actor playing a female part), which traditionally had been that of the elegant, highly feminine, younger woman. Kabuki was also moving away from the speech-based drama that had dominated the genre to one that emphasized the actor's physical expressiveness in the *henge buyō* (transformation dance), in which he moved swiftly from one character to another within a single dance, in the *tachimawari* (fight scene); and, most of all, in the *hoyogawari* (quick change), in which the same actor played several different roles in a single play.

Nanboku's plays transformed the nature of kabuki by depicting a world in which the sociopolitical order was crumbling, causing a profound sense of material loss or decay and leaving little foundation for spiritual order. It is not surprising, therefore, that Nanboku also was one of the pioneers of the ghost-story genre (*kaidan mono*) in kabuki. Value, it seems, could be found only in

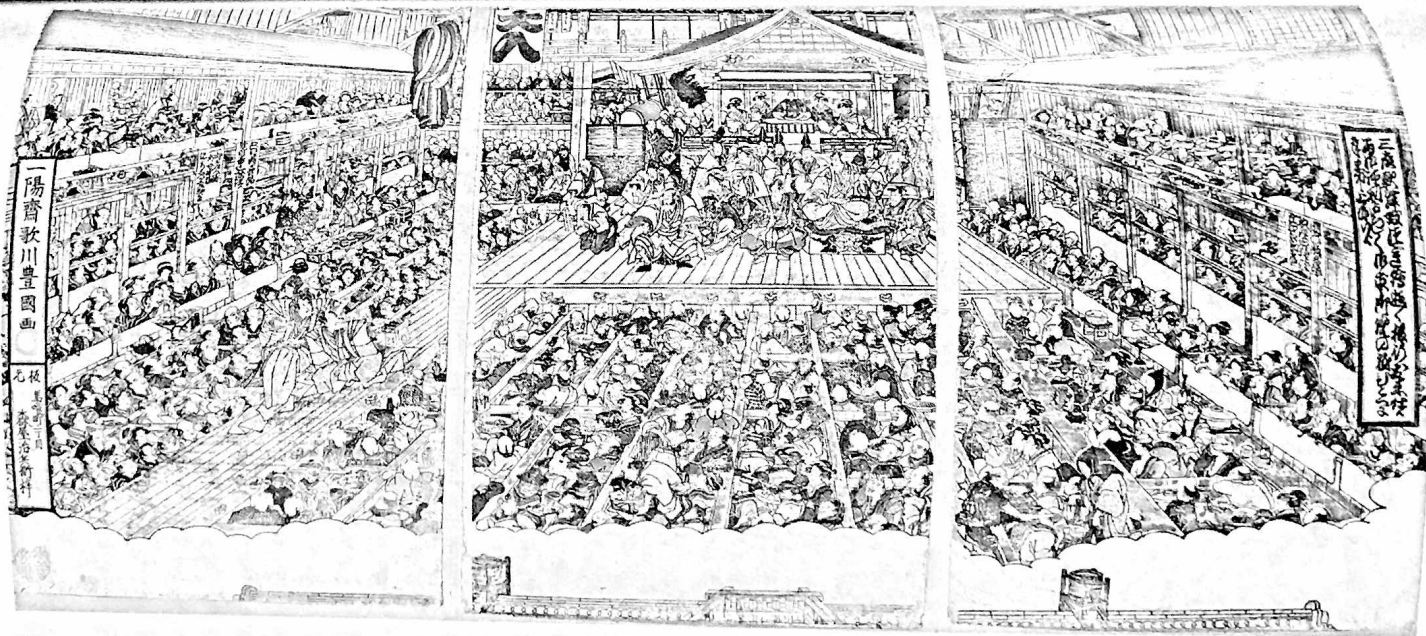
an individual's life force or energy, which was embodied in the "quick change" and other physical aspects of the acting, as well as in the strong, tenacious characters, who are often evil or horrifying. Nanboku was noted, as well, for his *kizewa* (literally, raw contemporary life) plays, which realistically depicted the lives of people at the bottom of society, thus capturing a dark side of late Edo kugawa society that the printed literature often overlooked. The term "realistic," however, is not entirely satisfactory. As some modern critics have pointed out, Nanboku's *Ghost Stories at Yotsuya* (*Yotsuya kaidan*, 1825), for example, is not "realistic" in that it depends heavily on ghosts and the supernatural. Rather, the word is better understood to mean that even though Nanboku uses the "world" (*sekai*) of history plays and of powerful samurai houses, he fills this world with outcasts or "nonhumans" (*hinin*) from the lower classes, such as masterless samurai (*rōnin*), beggars, grave diggers, and tobacco sellers. Into this drama, Nanboku intersperses erotic love scenes, brutal murders, and frightening ghost stories—all of which made for immensely popular and effective theater.

TSURUYA NANBOKU

Little is known about Tsuruya Nanboku IV (1755–1829) except that he was born in Edo and was the son of a dyer. In 1776 he became an apprentice to Sakurada Jisuke I (d. 1806), one of the leading kabuki playwrights of the day, who specialized in drama depicting contemporary life. In the following year Nanboku began working at the Nakamura Theater under the pen name Sakurada Heiō. In 1780, at the age of twenty-five, he married Oyoshi, the daughter of Tsuruya Nanboku III, the third in a succession of kabuki comic actors. It took another twenty years, however, before he produced his first hit, *Indian Tokubei, a Son of a Foreign Country* (*Tenijiku Tokubei Ikkubanashi*, 1804), starring Onoe Matsusuke, an actor with a tremendous range of roles who specialized in the kind of ghost plays and stage tricks that Nanboku was to make his own. Then, after taking the name Tsuruya Nanboku IV in 1811, he wrote more than 120 plays, the most famous today being *Scarlet Princess of Edo* (*Sakurajime arima no bunshō*, 1817¹) and *Ghost Stories at Yotsuya* (*Yotsuya kaidan*, 1825).

GHOST STORIES AT YOTSUYA (*YOTSUYA KAIKAN*, 1825)

In his *Eastern Seaboard Highway Yotsuya Ghost Stories* (*Tōkaido yotsuya kaidan*), better known as *Ghost Stories at Yotsuya*, Nanboku, who was considered a master of innovation (*shukō*), weaves recent events in Edo—such as a samurai's murder of his wife and a servant's murder of his master—into the historical "world" of Chōshingō.



This woodblock triptych by Utagawa Toyokuni I (1769–1825; signed "Ichiyōsai") shows the interior of a kabuki theater during the Bunka-Bunsei era (1804–1829) depicted in the "perspective print" (*uki-e*) mode, with Western linear perspective. On stage is a scene from *Confrontation with the Soga*. The actors on center stage are Matsumoto Kōshirō V (1764–1838) playing Kudō, Bandō Mitsugorō III (1775–1831) playing Asahina, and Iwai Hanshirō V (1776–1847) playing Ōiso no Tora. The two actors on the runway (*hanamichi*), which functioned as another stage space, are Ichikawa Danjūrō VII (1791–1859) and Onoe Matsusuke II (1784–1849, later Kikugorō III), performing as the Soga brothers Gorō and Jūrō. The simultaneous appearance of the stage roof (*hafu*). The "full house" (*ōiri*) sign hangs next to the tricolor curtain (*upper left*). The square earthen-floor pit (*dōma*) stands directly in front of the stage. On the two sides are the galleries (*sajiki*) for more affluent audiences. (Courtesy of the Tsubouchi Memorial Theatre Museum, Waseda University)

¹ A translation of *Scarlet Princess* appears in James Brandon, ed. and trans., *Kabuki: Five Classic Plays* (1975; reprint, Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1992).

The Storehouse of Loyal Retainers (*Kanadehon Chushingura*, 1748). Accordingly, in *Chushingura*, Lord Enya, provoked by Lord Kō no Moronao, injures him with a sword and is forced to commit suicide, leading to the destruction of Enya's family, and the dispersal of his retainers, who eventually take revenge on Moronao as their master's enemy. On the first day of the debut performance, the first three acts of *Ghost Stories at Yotsuya* were preceded by the first six acts of *Chushingura*, and on the second day the remaining acts of both plays were woven together. Act 3 became pivotal and was performed twice, once at the end of the first day and once at the beginning of the second day.

If *Chushingura* reflected the popular uplifting view of the famous vendetta, *Ghost Stories at Yotsuya* revealed the negative, dark, hidden side of the same world, of those at the bottom of society who wanted to participate in the vendetta but could not. Instead of rising up like the exemplary heroes of *Chushingura*, these men fall down a hole of self-destruction. When we juxtapose the two plays, one from the mid-eighteenth century and the other from the early nineteenth century, we can see the immense difference in the attitudes toward and of the samurai, whose circumstances deteriorated precipitously during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The warrior values of loyalty, obligation, self-sacrifice, and patience, which are extolled and dramatized in *Chushingura*, are replaced in *Ghost Stories* by acts of betrayal and murder for the sake of sex and money.

Nanboku originally wrote *Ghost Stories at Yotsuya* for two actors, Onoe Kikugorō III (the young son of his mentor Onoe Matsusuke), who simultaneously played three roles, Oiwa, Kohei, and Satō Tomoshichi; and Ichikawa Danjūrō VII, who performed the role of Tamiya Lemon, the archetype of the "erotic evil character" (*irodoku*). When the bodies of Oiwa and Kohei are fished out of the river by Lemon at the end of act 3, Kikugorō played both Oiwa and Kohei in a "quick change" (*hayagawari*).

In *Ghost Stories at Yotsuya*, the life force exemplified in the "quick change" can be found in the seemingly inexhaustible energy of the two protagonists, the ghost Oiwa and the villain Lemon, who collide with stunning force in a world that seems to have been stripped of all moral sense and justice. Equally important is the delicate mixture of comedy and tragedy, humor and horror, bantering and gruesome murder, with the drama rapidly and constantly shifting from one to the other. An essential part of this ironic mixture is the "erotic evil character" of Lemon, who is both repulsive and attractive. Of particular interest is the transformation of Oiwa from a vulnerable young woman into a vengeful ghost.

Of the original five acts, acts 2 and 3, which are translated here, are the most frequently performed today.

MAIN CHARACTERS

TAMIYA LEMON, a masterless samurai (*rōnin*) and a former retainer of Lord Enya
 OIWA, Lemon's wife
 KOHEI, Lemon's servant, loyal to Lord Enya



From the frontispiece of the gōkan edition of *Ghost Stories at Yotsuya*, called *Heard Start on an Eastern Seaboard Journey*: *Ghost Stories at Yotsuya* (*Tōkaidochi kudō no satōgake Yotsuya kudōan*, 1856), "written" by Onoe Baikō (Onoe Kikugorō III, 1754-1849), who performed in the first production in 1825, but in fact written by the playwright Hanagasa Bunyō (1735-1860) and illustrated by Ippitsuan Eisen (Keisai Eisen, 1791-1848). Oiwa's ghastly face—swollen forehead and enlarged mouth—looms large above a wheel of fire. The character for "heart" (*kokoro*) is placed above Tamiya Lemon, and cetic images of gouts on the border echo Oiwa's disfigured face. Text: "Autumn grasses also change in this way—a withered field" (*aki no chigusa / ko mo kawaru ka / kare nohara*). Ippitsuan.

BANSUKE, Kanzō's retainer
 CHŌBEI, a *rōnin*, Lemon's crony
 IRŌ KHEI, a rich samurai doctor in the service of Lord Kō no Moronao, father of Oyumi and grandfather of Oume
 KANZŌ, a *rōnin*, Lemon's crony
 MACHOBEI, the father of Kohei
 MOSUKE, a pawnbroker
 OMAKI, a nurse in the Itō household
 OUME, Oyumi's daughter and Khei's granddaughter, wants to marry Lemon
 OYUMI, widowed daughter of Itō Khei and mother of Oume
 TAKUETSU, a masseur, working for Lemon

Act 2, Tamiya Lemon's House
 Tamiya Lemon's Residence
 Tamiya Lemon, a *rōnin*, lives in a shabby tenement in Yotsuya, a neighborhood in Edo occupied by poor people and *rōnin*. Swallowing their pride,

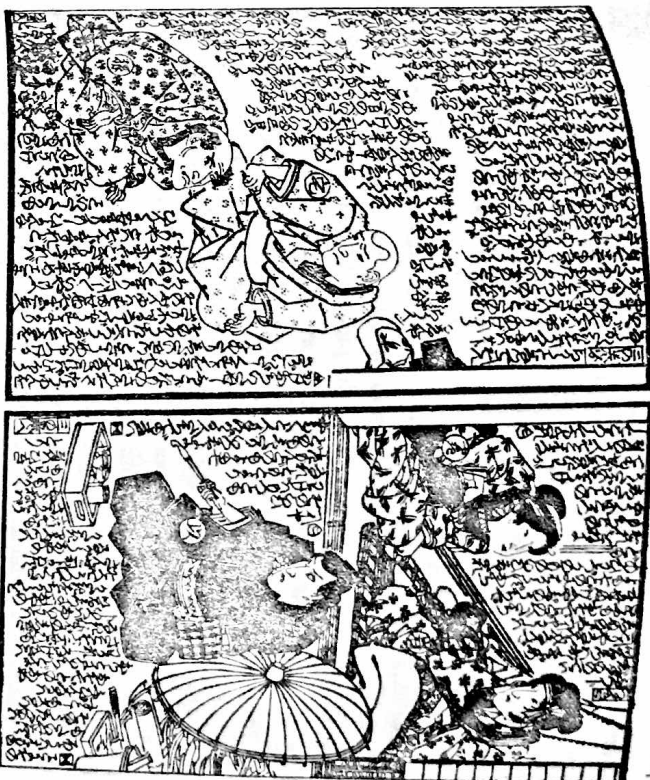
many must do craftwork at home to make ends meet. The set has gray walls with cracked and peeling plaster and a sliding, freestanding lattice door to the outside. There are a few sparse furnishings: a square paper floor lamp, a tiny white standing screen, and a small brazier with a teapot on it. Lively shamisen and percussion music suggests the bustle of commoner life. Lemon sits on the floor of the main room gluing triangles of paper onto the partially covered bamboo frame of an umbrella. His clothing is that of a commoner, but his bearing reveals that he once was a samurai. He listens coldly, not interrupting his work, as Magobei, the father of Lemon's servant Kohai, and Taketsu, a masseur, bow apologetically at his right. Magobei wears a plain cotton kimono, and his wig is flecked with gray. He crouches on all fours. Taketsu has the shaved head of a masseur and sits between Lemon and Magobei, trying to mediate their dispute.

TAKUETSU: Master Lemon, please listen! You are quite right, but please try to be a bit more understanding. It's all my fault. I made the mistake of introducing Kohai to you when you needed some help. I take full responsibility, so please give me a day or two to try to settle the matter.

LEMON: No, no, this is a matter that can't wait. Kohai is an embezzler and a thief. When he's caught, my samurai spirit won't be satisfied until I execute him. Ever since I lost my master, I've had to make umbrellas just to get by. Me, a samurai! Look at this! Do you think I do this for fun? (To Magobei) You there! You're his father. Everything depends on what you have to say. Stop acting like a senile old fool. (He rises and threatens Magobei.)

MAGOBEL: Oh, no, you are quite right. There is nothing I could possibly say to defend what my son has done. You said that Kohai stole something. If I may, I would like to ask what he took.

LEMON: It's nothing someone like you would know anything about. He stole a packet of rare Chinese medicine called *sōkisei* that has been passed down in the Tamiya house for generations. It's priceless; you won't find it anywhere else. The medicine is so potent that if someone lost the use of his legs, this drug will enable him to walk right before your eyes. My stipend was cut off when my master's household was disbanded, and I haven't received a cent since then. Even so, I have never let that medicine out of my hands. That's what Kohai stole. Look at this thing. (Picks up a short, badly made sword) This is all that Kohai left behind. He took my family's greatest treasure and left me with a rusty penknife. My friends are furious at what happened and left early this morning to try to track down Kohai. I'd be out there too, but I can't leave my wife, since she just had a baby and is still weak. That's why I needed help around here and took Kohai into my service. He's certainly been more trouble than he's worth! Just thinking about it makes me furious. When I get my hands on him, I'll take care of him once and for all. Taketsu, you're his guarantor. You're responsible for what he's done. Do you understand what I'm going to do?



At his residence, Lemon, in a black kimono with a tobacco set before him and tools and materials for making umbrellas, reproaches Magobei (left) and Taketsu (center) with his tobacco pipe. Owia, wearing a headband and looking ill, looks on from the next room as she reclines on the bedding. A mosquito net hangs behind her. Omaki, a maid from the household, reaches into her robe to give the special medicine to Owia.

TAKUETSU: You are only right to feel that way. You accepted the introduction of this humble masseur and took Kohai into your service; only to have him steal from you and flee. And what a time to run off, just when poor Owia has given birth and has not yet recovered her health. How could Kohai abandon you at such a time? I can find nothing to say to apologize. Magobei, Magobei! What do you think?

MAGOBEL: I don't quite know what to say. Kohai has never amounted to much, but I always thought he was honest. I'm shocked that he stole something. A family heirloom? A priceless packet of medicine?

TAKUETSU: That is strange, isn't it? Stealing cash is normal, but who steals medicine?

MAGOBEL (to himself): Hmm, now that his real master is so sick, maybe he thought this was his only hope?

LEMON: What?

² Kohai's former master, Matanojo, is another retainer of Lord Enya of the Chikushingura clan. Matanojo is extremely ill, and Kohai is desperate to get the medicine so that Matanojo can recover enough to participate in the vendetta.

MAGOBEL: I mean, what Kohei did was unforgivable.

LEMON: Listen, old man. That medicine may not look like much, but it's very rare. A druggist would pay at least a dozen gold pieces on the spot. My medicine is even more valuable because it has a certificate guaranteeing its authenticity. The medicine and the certificate have been handed down through my family for generations. There's nothing like it anywhere else. However, I'll give you a chance. You can have a couple of days to try to find Kohei yourself. If you don't find him by then, you can give me what the medicine is really worth—fifteen gold pieces. Got it? That's fifteen gold pieces. Find him or you owe me a fortune.

MAGOBEL: Thank you. I'll find him, and I'm sorry for what my son has done. (To Taketsu) Forgive me for having caused you so much trouble.

TAKETSU: It's not your fault. It's troublesome, but I got us into this situation in the first place. This is just one of those things that happens when you try to help someone. No wonder more people aren't helpful. (Magobei puts on his straw sandals and gets ready to leave.)

LEMON: Remember, two days. Come here the instant you hear anything about Kohei. I can make things difficult for you if you try to hide anything.

MAGOBEL: I understand. (To Taketsu) Doctor, thank you for everything. Good-bye. (Magobei departs down the runway, muttering as he goes. Taketsu prepares medicine for Owa and takes it into an enclosed room.)

LEMON: No cash, not even enough to keep up appearances, yet she's dumb enough to go and have a kid. If you want sweet innocence, that's what you'll get. (Lively lion dance music is played by the shamisen and percussion in the music room to the side of the stage. Chōbei, dressed in tattered clothing but wearing the two swords that indicate his samurai status, comes racing down the runway to the front door.)

CHŌBEI: Lemon, are you there? We found Kohei!

LEMON: Chōbei! You saw him?

CHŌBEI: Yes. I knew he lived somewhere across town, maybe on the other side of the river. I captured him just before he reached the bridge. Here's the packet of drugs he stole.

LEMON: Thank you. Where is that damn Kohei?

CHŌBEI: He's with Kanzō. Ah, it sounds like they're here. (The lion dance music begins again. Kanzō, his retainer Bansuke, and Kohei enter down the runway. Kohei's hands are tied with a coarse rope, his hair is disheveled, and his clothing is torn. He apologizes profusely, but Kanzō and Bansuke tell him that he won't get away with it.)

LEMON: Kanzō, thank you for all your trouble. I heard the details from Chōbei. I greatly appreciated your work. Ah, Bansuke, is it? Thank you for your efforts.

BANSUKE: Thank you, sir. You should be feeling better now. (He removes the rope from Kohei.)

TAKETSU (to Kohei, who sits, his head hanging in shame): Here, here

for your sake. I've also gone to a lot of trouble, too. Even your old father had to be called in. What got into you?

KOHEI: I owe everything to your kindness in finding me this position. Instead of showing the proper gratitude, I've made things difficult for you, all because I was seized by a sudden impulse. And now my father has been drawn in, too. I guess he must have gone home already. I'm sorry to hear that. He must be worried sick about me. Master, since Chōbei took back the medicine, and I didn't touch anything else, please have mercy and forgive me. I beg you.

LEMON: That's ridiculous. When a servant disobeys his master, it can't be overlooked. A dishonest and insubordinate servant has to be punished properly. We'll have to find just the right treatment for you.

KANZŌ: Lemon, I've been thinking about some of the things he said. I hear that his old master was a samurai in Lord Enya's house, where you also served. Remember Oshida Matanojo, the most loyal samurai in the whole house? Kohei's entire family was in his service. You'd never guess that someone who used to work for such an honest person would go so bad, would you?

LEMON: Do you mean the same Matanojo I knew in Lord Enya's mansion? Kohei used to serve him? Is that true?

KOHEI: Yes, everything you say is true. My father's family has served Matanojo's family for generations. When Lord Enya's house was disbanded, Matanojo became a rōnin. Then recently he became very ill. I entered your service to help support him. My wife, my father, and even my little boy have gone to work also. We all want to do whatever we can to help him now that he's facing hard times, but we're so poor that we can't do very much. I wanted desperately to cure him, so I attempted to steal the medicine. I did it for the best possible reason. I stole out of loyalty to my master. I thought there could be no higher cause. Even so, the fact that you found me out must be heaven's punishment. Please forgive me.

LEMON: You mean you stole my family heirloom for your master's sake? Did Matanojo order you to do that?

KOHEI: No, no. He knows nothing about it. I did it myself, thinking that it was the only loyal thing to do.

LEMON: It doesn't matter whether loyalty or insanity made you do it. If you steal, you're a thief. Is there some law saying thieves can get off if they're properly loyal? What a ridiculous ideal! At least I have the medicine back now. I might have spared you if you had paid me something for it. But you didn't give me a cent. For the theft of the medicine, I will break all your fingers, one by one.

CHŌBEI: That sounds like fun. Can we start right now?

KANZŌ: Ten fingers instead of taking his life? That's letting him off too easy.

BANSUKE: Since I'm an apprentice, let me try breaking one too—for the practice.

LEMON: Come on, help me.



Kohbei (*left*) is restrained by Kanzo and others. The medicine is placed in front of Iemon (*right*), in a black robe, next to the tobacco tray. The pawnbroker (*far right*) happily holds the paper-wrapped bundle containing the cash given to him by Onaki.

KONEI: Stop it! I have to take care of my parents. What can I do if my hands are useless?

ALL THREE (KANZŌ, BANSUKE, AND CHŌBEI):³ What do we care?

KONEI: Mercy! Show some kindness. Please, I returned the medicine.

IEMON: Shut up! Gag him!

ALL THREE: OK, OK. (*The three surround him, and Bansuke takes a handkerchief and ties it over Kohbei's mouth.*)

BANSUKE: That should keep him quiet.

KANZŌ: After we finish with the fingers, how about pulling his hair out?

CHŌBEI: That's a good idea. (*They mime kicking and beating him. Music announces the appearance on the runway of Onaki, a wet nurse serving in the neighboring household of the rich Dr. Itō Kinei. She is accompanied by a servant bearing a red lacquered ceremonial barrel of saké and a stack of lacquered boxes filled with food—expensive ceremonial gifts celebrating the birth of a child. She carries a gray cloth bundle that we later learn contains a baby's yellow- and black-checked kimono. She comes to the front door.*)

ONAKI: Is anyone home? May I come in?

ALL THREE: Who could that be?

ALL THREE: Someone's here. Stick Kohbei in the closet.

IEMON: OK, OK. Get in there. (*They drag Kohbei to the closet, slide the door open, throw him in, and close the door. Onaki presents the gifts and a packet of medicine she claims will cure Oiwa. She goes into the room at left to attend the mother and child. Mosuke, a pawnbroker, enters and demands the repayment of five gold pieces plus the rental for mosquito netting, bedding, and a padded nightgown. Iemon is forced to give the pawnbroker his precious medicine and the accompanying document.*)

MOSUKE: Well, now that's cleared up. Now the rentals. I'll just take the mosquito net and the bedding. Excuse me.

IEMON: What are you doing? You're still taking the other things?

MOSUKE: Yup. If you don't pay another gold piece, I can't clear the account.

Excuse me. (*He heads toward the room at stage left, but Onaki comes out and stops him.*)

ONAKI: Pray wait a moment. Don't force your way into a sickroom. If I heard correctly, it's a matter of money, isn't it? Here, this will probably do. Go away and leave the things here. (*She hands Mosuke a paper-wrapped bundle, somewhat more than the amount that is owed. Iemon is surprised and wonders what he will have to do in exchange.*)

MOSUKE (*examining the packet*): Hey, this is too much.

ONAKI: Shh, there's no need to wake up the mother. Well, sir?

MOSUKE: Uh, well, I'm speechless. This is truly a great favor, ma'am.

IEMON: After all this help, there is no way to show my thanks.

ONAKI: Please, there is no need to worry about it. Well, I must take my leave now.

MOSUKE: I'll walk you to the street.

IEMON: Nurse, thanks. You've been a great help.

ONAKI: My best wishes to all of you. Well, Mosuke?

MOSUKE: After you. (*Onaki and Mosuke exit to lively music. The rest are silent for a moment, impressed with the generosity of Itō Kinei and his household.*)

CHŌBEI: Well, Iemon, we've been getting a lot of help from the Itō mansion. You probably should go over there and say a few words of thanks.

IEMON: Maybe I should, but I can't do it.

CHŌBEI AND KANZŌ: What do you mean?

IEMON: Itō Kinei is a retainer of our enemy, Lord Kō no Moronao. Our master is dead, and his retainers have been expelled from his mansion and scattered. Meanwhile, Kō no Moronao lives in the best part of town in a rich mansion. I was once a retainer of Lord Enya, a victim of Lord Moronao's evil plots.

Even after all they've given us, I can't go to my enemy's house.

CHŌBEI AND KANZŌ: You're right, that's a problem. (*During this time the baby starts crying in the room at stage left.*)

TAKUETSU: Oh, no. That child again.

3. The lines attributed to these three are not spoken entirely in unison. Usually one or another of them speaks, with the others joining in for the last few words or for a laugh together at the end of the line.

LEMON: That brat cries a lot. Maybe the fleas are getting to him. (The music becomes languid, suggesting the atmosphere of a sickroom. Lemon pushes open the sliding screens to reveal his wife, Oiwa, sitting on the cotton bedding, open looking sick and weak. A large mosquito net hangs from the ceiling, and small folding screen protects the bed from drafts. An amulet for safe birth hangs around Oiwa's neck, and she is holding her baby and patting him on the back.)

LEMON: Oiwa, are you better today? How do you feel?

CHÔBEI AND KANZÔ: We came to visit you.

OIWA: You are very kind. Please excuse me. They say one always feels ill after giving birth. But perhaps because of the strange weather we've been having lately, I feel even worse than usual. (Takuetsu helps her into the main room. She puts the baby on a cushion and covers him with a robe.)

LEMON: Oiwa, I've never seen that kimono before. Did you make it?

OIWA: This came a moment ago from the Itô mansion with the warm wishes of the widow Oyumi. Dear, please go and thank them.

LEMON: Is that so? They've been so generous it's embarrassing. I don't understand why.

CHÔBEI: Look here, it's like I always say. What's past is past. Tamingi Lemon, now you're a rōnin. Forget about ideas like duty and avenging former masters and go to the enemy's mansion.

OIWA: He's right. You really must go to the mansion and thank them.

LEMON: You're right, Oiwa, I have to go, but I shouldn't go alone, without you. Oiwa: If you have to go with someone, take those two along.

CHÔBEI: Yeah, we'll go—

LEMON: Well, as they say, the sooner the better. Let's go.

TAKUETSU: And I'll look after things while you're gone. It's best for you to go and express your gratitude.

LEMON (puts on his two swords and an old short formal jacket): I'm going, but I haven't fixed anything to eat yet. Could you do it?

TAKUETSU: Yes, yes. I'll take care of everything.

LEMON: Remember, keep your eye on the closet. (Points to Kohēi's sword) He thinks that thing makes him look important. (To Oiwa) This medicine in your blood circulation came from the Itô mansion. You'd better take it. The said it was an old family secret. (He hands over the packet of powdered medicine.)

OIWA: Oh? A little while ago the nurse said something about some medicine. Please give it to me. I'll take it when the water is ready. (Slips the medicine into her kimono) Come back quickly.

LEMON: I'll come right back. Let's go. (To Takuetsu) Remember to make dinner.

TAKUETSU: OK.

LEMON: I'm going now, Oiwa.

OIWA: Please come back as soon as you can.

LEMON: What would keep me there? Let's go. (Moderately lively music plays as the men depart. The sound of a temple bell increases the feeling of loneliness and creates a foreboding mood. The shamisen music begins again, slowly and pensively, as Oiwa stares after the men.)

OIWA: Lemon has been mean to me from the moment we were married. He didn't even look pleased when I told him his baby was a boy. Every day, from dawn to dusk, he calls the boy a brat, saying he is nothing but a nuisance. He grumbles that the baby is just another mouth to feed. He says things like that even when he knows I can hear him. Living in this house is constant torture, with little wounds that never heal. But I must remember that Lemon promised to help me attack my father's murderer.⁴ (She stops and weeps, then continues to speak while crying.) If I can just endure this a little while longer, I'll be able to leave this evil man. Please, let us avenge my father's murder soon. (She pauses in fervent prayer. A decorative tortoiseshell comb in her hair drops to the floor. She picks it up.) This tortoiseshell comb was my mother's. Look at the cheerful swirl of chrysanthemums and the beautiful old-fashioned silver work. Even though we need money desperately, I'll never give up this comb. But since I had my baby, I've been so sick—I feel so weak I'm not sure I can live. If I die, I want my sister Osode to have it to remember our mother. It's the only thing from our mother that I still have left. (She gazes at the comb. The baby starts crying. She comforts him and returns him to his cushion.) Oh, I'm dizzy again. It must be my bad circulation. I hope that the powder will help. (To slow background music, she picks up the packet of medicine with a prayer of thanks. Ominously, the action is emphasized by the boom of a temple bell. She lays down the package and picks the comb up off the floor and puts it back in her hair. She pours the medicine directly onto her hand, happily lifts both hands to her forehead in a gesture of gratitude and takes the medicine.) I'm sure I'll feel better now. Here, my precious little boy. (She dangles the new kimono in front of the baby.) You got something nice today, didn't you? I wonder who made it, little Oume? The nurse? (She drops the kimono unknowingly and continues to wave her hands. After a moment she notices the kimono on the floor, picks it up, dangles it in front of the baby, but drops it again. She notices that her fingers are numb and begins to rub them. Suddenly she gasps as she feels a sharp pain in her chest and starts to moan as her face begins to burn with fever.) Oh, oh! The medicine has made me feel worse. Oh! My face is burning. It's never felt like this before. The pain. (She huddles on the floor in pain. Just then, there is a sharp pounding on the door of the closet where Kohēi is tied up.)

⁴ In act 1, Oiwa's father, Yotsuya Samon, learned that Lemon had stolen from his master and demanded that Lemon give up Oiwa. Wanting to keep her, Lemon killed her father without her knowing and then cynically promised to avenge his death if Oiwa remained with him.

TAKUETSU (*enters from the back and, since Oiwa is hunched over, is hardly unaware of what has happened to her*): Oh Oiwa, shall I fix some soup? (*She lifts her head, and he can see that she has changed, but the room is too dark to see clearly*.) This is awful. What happened to you? You're pale, your face looks different.

OIWA: I took the powder and right away—Oh, it hurts.

TAKUETSU: It started to hurt after you took the medicine? The draft is bad for you, come here. (*He bends over her and screams at the sight of her face but quickly recovers and rubs her back, being careful not to look directly at her face, which the audience still cannot see. The baby begins to cry, and Takuetsu just as he is running back and forth between them, the closet door slides open and Kohei tries to get out.*) Hey! Don't try to escape! (*Slides the closet door shut and tries to decide what to do*) If I take care of one thing, the other two will get away from me. What a time to be house-sitting. (*Oiwa is in pain, Takuetsu puts the baby in the room at left and closes the door. He tries to comfort Oiwa, patting and massaging her back. The action is punctuated by the sound of the temple bell as the stage revolves.*)

Itô Kihai's Mansion

Lively folk music sounds as the stage revolves to reveal the grand and luxurious home of the rich doctor Itô Kihai. The interior is surrounded by a veranda with a step down into the garden. The alcove at stage left contains a precious scroll and a flower arrangement. Lemon is seated in the center with Chôbei and Kanzô to his right. Behind them sit Oyumi, Kihai's widowed daughter and Oume's mother, wearing a somber kimono befitting a widow, and Omaki, Oume's nurse. Chôbei and Kanzô enjoy the banquet while Bansuke performs a folk dance in the garden below. Kihai is dressed in the restrained colors of a prosperous retired man and wears glasses with round black frames. He is carefully washing gold coins in a large copper basin and putting them away in a small wooden box. When the stage stops turning, Bansuke tumbles and everyone laughs. Bansuke joins the banquet, and the scene begins with some improvised light conversation about the private lives of the actors on stage. Servants in formal divided skirts bring in three covered soup bowls on trays, which they set in front of Chôbei, Kanzô, and Bansuke.

LEMON (*observing Kihai's actions*): Sir, are those sword ornaments you are cleaning?

KIHAÏ: No, nothing so important. These are just some old coins I inherited from my father. If I don't wash them from time to time, the gold and silver gets all tarnished. This is about all an old retired man can do anymore. Ha, ha, ha.

LEMON: Not a bad job to have.



At the Itô residence, Kanzô and Chôbei gasp in awe at the gold coins in their soup bowls. Behind them stand Oyumi and her daughter, Oume (*far left*), in a long-sleeved robe. Kihai (*far right*), the master of the house, stands behind Lemon.

ALL THREE (KANZÔ, BANSUKE, AND CHÔBEI): Let us give you a hand. Ha, ha, ha.

OYUMI: It's not much, but please have some soup and a cup of saké.

OMAKI: Please do have a drink.

ALL THREE: You're going to too much trouble. But Lemon doesn't have a tray.

BANSUKE: Here, let me. (*He tries to pass his tray to Lemon.*)

OYUMI: Oh no. We have something very special for Master Lemon. Please, it's not much, but go ahead and eat.

CHÔBEI: Let's eat then. (*They lift the lids of their soup bowls. To their astonishment, the bowls are filled with gold coins.*) This is a real delicacy.

KANZÔ AND BANSUKE: We're much obliged.

OYUMI: We've invited Master Lemon so many times. Now that he has graciously accepted our invitation and you have been kind enough to come along with him, please have as much as you like. We are happy that you like our humble meal. Omaki, give them another helping if they want more.

OMAKI: As you wish. Please don't hesitate to ask.

ALL THREE: What a great banquet. (*They put the money away in the breasts of their kimono.*)

KIHAÏ: Now that we've taken care of your companions, what shall we serve you, Lemon, our eminent guest of honor?

LEMONT: It must be something special. *(The music stops.)*

OYUMI: If you are ready, we can serve you, but—if you will excuse us for a few moments.

KANZŌ AND CHŌBEI: We understand. Let's give them some time alone.

OYUMI *(to Omaki)*: Please take care of our guests.

OMAKI: Let me show you around the grounds. *(Omaki leads Chōbei, Kanzō, and Bansuke through the curtained door at the rear. Oyumi exits. Kineh puts the coins he has been washing on the lid of the box, which he slides over in front of Iemon.)*

KINEH: Please be kind enough to accept these, Iemon.

LEMONT: Why are you giving me all this money? *(Looks pointedly at Kineh)*

OYUMI *(from behind the curtained door)*: Let me explain the matter to you. *(She leads her daughter, Oume, through the doorway. Oume is wearing a kimono with long flowing sleeves, the dress of a young, unmarried girl.)* This girl is Oume, my daughter by my late husband Mataichi.

KINEH: Oume is my dearest granddaughter. By some mysterious fate, she fell in love with you the first time she saw you and began to suffer from her sickness. One day we thought it would do her good to get outside, and so we all went to the Asakusa Temple. There she miraculously—

OYUMI: Saw you again. She was happy for the first time in so long. *(To her daughter)* Well, dear, now you can finally say what you've kept hidden in your heart for so long. *(She leads Oume to Iemon's side.)*

OUME: After having worried my dear mother so much, how can I hide anything? One day, shortly after you moved into this neighborhood, Master Tamiya, I caught a glimpse of you, and from that moment—I have done nothing but dream of you.

OYUMI: She was so consumed with love that she would not leave her bed. Every day her face and body grew thinner. When I questioned her, she told me about you, the man she could not forget.

OUME: But you're married. I couldn't hope to have my wish granted. I tried to be firm and put you out of my mind. But when two people are linked by fate, it's impossible to forget. Let me be your servant or even your sculler maid. I don't mind. Anything to let me stay by your side. *(Bows to Iemon)*

KINEH: It's just as you have heard. I would like to have you as my son-in-law. Please grant Oume her wish.

OYUMI: My daughter has become obsessed with you. Listen to her, she says she would even condescend to live as a commoner. She would be a heart-servant or your mistress. But this is a samurai household, and such a breach of class could not be kept secret. *(To Oume)* Now that my husband is dead, you are all I have left. How can I allow you to do such a thing?

LEMONT: Your daughter's feelings leave me quite speechless. I was adopted, it's all the heir to the Tamiya family, and duty binds me to my wife, Owa. It's all heartbreaking, but unfortunately—

So you deny my granddaughter's request?

KINEH: It is only right that you refuse her. And now, Oume, we must be resigned to forgetting about Iemon.

OYUMI: Yes, I'm resigned to it. I've made my decision, and I will prove it to you now. *(Takes a razor from her sash.)* Hail Amida Buddha! *(She bends over and tries to cut her own throat, but they stop her.)*

KINEH: You have acted virtuously. Your heart's desire was not granted. . . .

OYUMI: So you have decided to die with honor. My daughter's spirit is worthy of a samurai. How sad that your prayers could not be granted.

CHŌBEI: Hey, Iemon, you're making a big mistake. Look, Owa's going to die sooner or later. After she's gone, you're going to need a wife anyway. So why don't you make these two nice people happy and go ahead and change your nest? That's what you should do.

LEMONT: No, no. Even if it makes me rich, it's not right for me to abandon Owa. That's the one thing I couldn't do.

KINEH *(takes all the gold from the box and presents it to Iemon)*: Please, kill me. Please kill this poor old man.

LEMONT: What are you talking about? I know that it must be a shock for Oume to be refused, but why are you asking me to kill you?

KINEH: There is something else I must tell you. I found my granddaughter's suffering pitiful, but I knew that because you already had a wife, getting you to marry her would be difficult. I considered all kinds of plans, and finally, without telling Oyumi anything, I sent a disfiguring poison to Owa, falsely claiming it was medicine. I thought that the problem would solve itself as soon as her beauty disappeared. Your love for your wife would vanish, so you would divorce her and marry my granddaughter. I kept this evil plan to myself and sent the medicine by way of the nurse. I knew that it would ruin her face but leave her life untouched. It would leave her alive! I clung to that fact, telling myself that it wouldn't be such a great crime. However, matters have not worked out as I hoped. I am responsible for a great tragedy. That's why I want you to kill me.

OYUMI: You thought up this evil plan all for the sake of my poor young child?

OUME: This is how I am being punished for my sinful desires.

KINEH: If you're able to forgive me, all my family's gold is yours.

CHŌBEI: It would be a big mistake not to take what's on your plate.

KINEH: Get rid of your anger by killing me!

OYUMI: No! Not here in your own house.

OUME: It's better for me to die. *(She tries again to kill herself, but Oyumi stops her.)*

KINEH: Will you forgive me?

LEMONT: I, I—

OYUMI: If you die, how can I protect this child all by myself?

LEMONT: Well—

KIHEI: Then kill me!

LEMON: I, well . . .

KIHEI: I've done a monstrous thing.

OYUMI (*forcibly*): Please, give us your answer.

LEMON: I've made my decision. I'll leave Oiwa and take your granddaughter's hand.

KIHEI: Then you give your consent?

OYUMI: You're granting—

CHŌBEI: This child's wishes?

LEMON: In exchange, I have a request myself.

KIHEI: And that is?

LEMON: Recommend me to Lord Moronao as a retainer.⁵

KIHEI: Done. I would have done that even if you hadn't asked, now that we all are one family.

LEMON: If I take your granddaughter, we will be father and son-in-law. From this moment, I will change my name from Tamiya to Ito.⁶

OYUMI: As they say, the sooner, the better.

KIHEI: We'll have the wedding ceremony tonight. Do you agree?

LEMON: Certainly. (*To himself*) Hmm, maybe I can put the blame on that masseur who comes to see Oiwa.

KIHEI: What?

LEMON: Oh, nothing. I suppose we can discuss the details later.

CHŌBEI: First things first. Now you should exchange wedding cups. I'll be your go-between.

OUME: This is embarrassing.

OYUMI: She's still a bit shy.

OUME (*bashfully*): Oh.

KIHEI: Well, son-in-law? (*Takes out a marriage cup. Oume bashfully clings to lemon.*)

LEMON (*changing his tone and putting his hand on Oume's shoulder*): Now that you are my wife, I'll swear an oath on my sword.

OYUMI AND KIHEI: A blessing on you both. (*They clasp their hands in prayerful thanks. The temple bell sounds. The music increases in volume and tempo as the stage revolves. The actors continue to celebrate the marriage as they are carried out of sight.*)

5. Many rōnin dearly wished to find service in a samurai household so that they could serve in a position befitting their social rank and receive a stipend. For Lemon, this is perhaps the most attractive aspect of marrying Oume, even though Moronao was responsible for his former master's death.

6. Lemon announces that he will be adopted into the Ito clan and serve Lord Kōno Moronao, the enemy of his own master, Lord Enya. It was a common practice to adopt a son-in-law as one's heir.

Tamiya Lemon's Residence

To heighten the tension, the large drum plays wind patterns, which derive from the sound of wind rattling the wooden sliding doors and shutters of the commoners' houses. Takuetsu lights a lamp, sees how horribly Oiwa's face has become disfigured, and staggers out to buy some lamp oil. He collapses in fear at center stage and finally makes it out the front door. He collapses again on the runway and tries to stand several times, but his legs keep collapsing under him. Finally he runs off. Oiwa takes the baby into the room at left; the audience still has not seen her face. A popular song is played, and the temple bell sounds. Lemon staggers down the runway, tipsy from drink. He stops outside the gate.

LEMON: Kihei claimed the drug wouldn't kill her, only change her appearance. If she's—I'll look for myself first. (*He enters the house. Languid music plays, evoking the heat of summer.*)

OIWA (*calling from inside the room*): Takuetsu, are you back with the oil already?

LEMON: What oil? It's me.

OIWA: Is that you, Lemon? (*Lemon opens the sliding paper screens in front of the room at stage left. Oiwa is still hidden by the mosquito netting, which is almost opaque.*)

LEMON: How are you feeling? Did the medicine help your circulation?

OIWA: It helped my circulation, but as soon as I took it, I broke into a terrible fever. My face felt like it was on fire.

LEMON: The fever felt the worst in your face?

OIWA: Yes, it's all numb now. (*She comes out of the mosquito netting. Lemon sees her and is shocked.*)

LEMON: Oh, it's changed so quickly.

OIWA: What's changed?

LEMON: What I was saying was that—that while I was at Kihei's, your face has changed, the color has come back into your cheeks. It must be the effect of the drug. Yes, you look like you're getting better.

OIWA: I don't know if my face looks better or worse. I feel just the same. It's been like this day after day without a break. Lemon, if I died now, I would leave this world with no regrets—except for my child. It's only pity for my child that keeps me tied to this wretched life. If I die, please don't marry again, at least for a while.

LEMON: I'll marry if I feel like it.

OIWA: What?

LEMON: I'll find a new wife right away. I'll get a better wife. So what? There are plenty of people who get married again.

OIWA: Lemon, you're cruel! You were born heartless. I always knew what you were like. I married you because—

LEMON: You needed help to avenge your father's murder. Well, I don't feel like

getting involved. Avenging murder is old-fashioned. Leave me out of it. We got married because you wanted a swordsman, but I'm not interested.

OIWA: What? So now — but you —

LEMON: So I don't feel like it anymore. What are you going to do about it? If you don't like it, leave. Go find someone else who has the time to waste on vendettas. Vendettas make me sick.

OIWA: If you refuse, I have no one else to turn to. I suppose I should have expected you to fail me. If you want me to go, I will. But what about the child? Will you have your new wife take care of our baby?

LEMON: If you don't want a stepmother to have him, take the brat with you. I'm not giving up a chance for a good new wife for the sake of a stupid baby. But I need some cash; something came up. Do you have something you can lend me? Is there anything around here we can pawn? (Looks around and sees the ornamental comb on the floor) Why don't I take this? (Picks it up) OIWA (grabbing it from him): That's the comb my mother left me. I'll never let that out of my sight.

LEMON: You won't, will you? Well, my new woman doesn't have a nice dress comb, so she keeps asking me to buy her one. What's wrong with giving her this one?

OIWA: This is the one thing I can never give up.

LEMON: Then give me something I can buy a comb with. Also, I need to dress up tonight, so I need to get my good clothes out of hock. Lend me something! Come on, make it quick. (Shows her. The languid music begins again.)

OIWA: There's nothing left to speak of, but perhaps this? (She takes off her outer kimono, leaving herself dressed only in a thin, pale gray underkimono, which makes her look more ghostlike.) I'm sick, but since you asked for something, I'll give you this. (She hands the kimono to Lemon.)

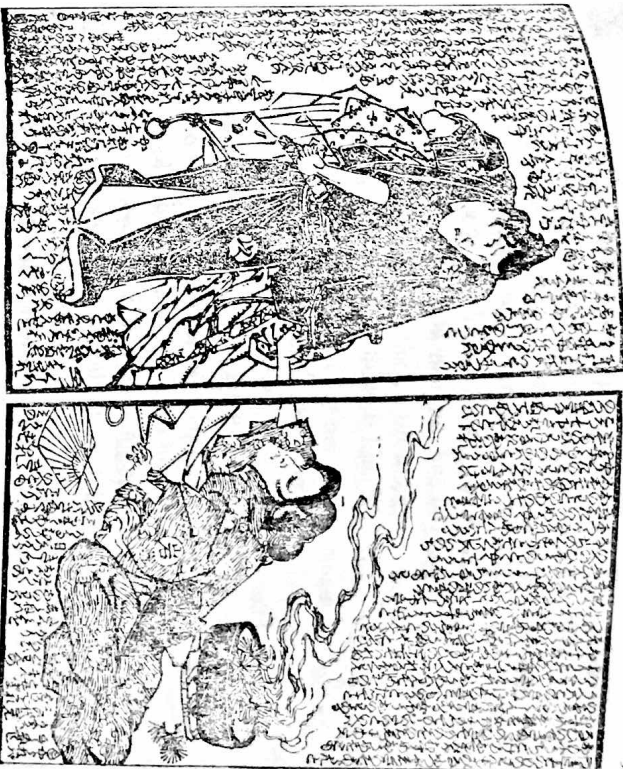
LEMON (examining the clothing): This won't bring enough. I need more. List there anything else? How about the mosquito netting? (He takes it down and starts to go. She clutches at the net.)

OIWA: Wait! Without a mosquito net, my baby will be eaten alive by mosquito toes as soon as it gets dark. (She takes back the net.)

LEMON: If the mosquitoes start eating him, your job as a parent is to chase them away. Let go! I said, let go! (He tugs roughly. Oiwa is dragged along the floor with the net. Finally he kicks her and pulls the net away, her fingers, her nails caught in the net. Oiwa lets out a cry and holds up her hands, her fingertips are covered with blood, showing that the nails have been torn apart.)

LEMON: This still isn't enough, you stingy bitch! (A popular song and a temple bell are heard as Lemon goes up the runway, stops, and looks up as he calculates how much he can pawn the items for. Then he exits.)

OIWA: Lemon! I can't let you have the mosquito net. (Goes to the door.) He's already gone. He took the only thing I couldn't give up. Even though I'm weak and sick, I hung on to it for dear life for the sake of my child. The net's torn my fingernails away. (Stares at her blood-covered fingers.) Lemon



Lemon takes Oiwa's clothing and the mosquito net and drags her across the floor. Oiwa, her face half-swollen, is left wearing only a single underkimono. A brazier burns pine needles.

you're so cruel. I feel sorry for my poor baby when I think that he's your flesh and blood. (She broods. The baby cries. Oiwa stands unsteadily, looking around. She finally pulls out a small brazier and wearily starts burning incense to drive away the mosquitoes. Lemon reappears on the runway with the kimono and mosquito netting slung over his shoulder. He has Taketsu in tow.)

TAKUETSU: Master, you're going too far. If you do that, everyone will talk about me and Oiwa.

LEMON: I'll fix it all if you do your part right. (He whispers his plan in Taketsu's ear.)

TAKUETSU: Then you're going to have the wedding tonight?

LEMON: Keep it quiet. Here. (He shows him a small gold coin wrapped in paper.)⁷

TAKUETSU: You're giving me this gold coin? To make me —

LEMON: Do it right, and it's yours. (He gestures with his sword to show what will happen if Taketsu refuses.)

TAKUETSU: Yes, I understand. (After Lemon has exited) What a mess I'm in

⁷ Lemon has the gold coins he received from Kihel, but he is passing Oiwa's possessions to get her to leave him of her own volition or at least to throw her into Taketsu's arms.

now! Oiwa, I'm sorry to have kept you waiting so long. Here's the oil. (He picks up the lantern.)

Oiwa (*resignedly fanning the incense burner*): You're back? So soon? After you left, Iemon came and took away the mosquito net.

TAKUETSU: Back to the pawnshop, eh? Tsk, tsk, how very thoughtless of him. What will happen to you and the baby without it? Well now, look at you. My, how thin your kimono is.

Oiwa: Even though I'm sick and shouldn't get chilled, Iemon forced me to give him my kimono.

TAKUETSU: Really? How unfortunate. What hard times you've been through. Instead of all that trouble, wouldn't it be better to find another man? Think about it. I used to read palms. Let me look. (*Goes to Oiwa, takes her hand, and looks intently at the palm, looking for an excuse to try to seduce her*) Look at this, there's an unlucky line running through your palm. According to this, your husband will cause you endless pain. It says here that you should cut off this line, cut off all ties with that man. (*As he says this, Oiwa looks at Takuetsu. He sees her face, gasps, and turns away.*)

Oiwa (*jumping up in surprise*): What are you trying to do? Remember, I'm the wife of a samurai. If you try anything like that again, I won't forgive you next time.

TAKUETSU: Wait! Your faithfulness will only hurt you, Iemon lost his love for you long ago. If you insist on staying with him, it will lead to nothing but more misfortune. I'm the man for you.

Oiwa: What? Rather than patiently enduring hardships with my rightful husband, I should turn to you? Explain yourself. Are you trying to lure me into adultery? You insolent creature! Even though I'm only a woman, I am the wife and the daughter of samurai. Do you think you can get away with talking that way to me? (*Picks up Kohei's sword, deftly unsheathes it, and confronts Takuetsu*) There must be a reason you're doing this, tell me!

TAKUETSU (*shaking*): Put that down, it's dangerous! You'll get hurt! (*He tries to grab Oiwa's hand. They struggle back and forth. Finally he grabs the sword, tosses it into the room at left, and holds her down in a seated position. The sword lands against the pillar of the room, with the tip sticking out.*) Listen. It was all a lie. What I said just now was all a lie. Really, calm down! Even a poor wretch like me wouldn't want a woman with your awful face. I don't know why this was fated to happen, but on top of your sickness, now your face. It breaks my heart.

Oiwa: My face? Along with the fever there was a sudden pain, could that have—?

TAKUETSU: It is a woman's fate to be deceived. That miracle drug for your circulation that you got from Kihai was all a trick. It was a poison meant to change a person's face, an extraordinary poison. When you took it, your face changed and now you look like an ugly, evil woman. Don't you know that?

How pitiful. (*He goes to the back of the room and takes her mirror off its stand.*) Here, if you want to know, look at this. Look at your face in this. (*He stands behind her and forces her to look in the mirror.*)

Oiwa: Ahh, my face is gray, gray as my kimono. What's happened to my face? Is this my face? Have I really changed into a demon? (*She holds the mirror at various angles, hoping that the image will change. She huddles on the floor and cries, leaving the mirror on the floor beside her.*)

TAKUETSU: This play had another author, Kihai's granddaughter Oume. She wanted Iemon to be her husband, but her family knew that Iemon already had a wife. Kihai has gold to spare and thought he could buy Iemon, but he worried that perhaps Iemon had some feeling of loyalty to you. To make absolutely sure he wouldn't be refused, Kihai tricked you with this medicine. He thought that if your faced changed, your husband's love would run out. Poor Oiwa, you innocently took the medicine, not knowing a thing. What a sad situation. (*Her face has been gradually revealing her growing fury as she looks intently at the mirror.*)

Oiwa (*spoken with great deliberateness*):

I never guessed the truth these gifts concealed,

sent day after day by our good neighbor Ito Kihai.

My heart swelled with thanks.

Even when the wet nurse came, the destructive poison in her hand,

to cause my ruin, I clapped my hands in gratitude.

Now each time I think of it, my heart fills with shame.

They must laugh and laugh at me.

Bitter, oh how bitter, is this humiliation. (*She lies on the floor sobbing.*)

TAKUETSU (*drawing near*):

Iemon has run out of love for you.

As bridegroom of the house of Ito, he plotted to rid himself of you.

"Play my wife's lover," he ordered.

I replied, "Never!" and up came his sword.

So we have no choice but to play out our little comedy.

He stripped you of your robe, cruelly tearing it away.

But now the truth is revealed.

Tonight! The wedding is tonight.

By pawning your things, money for the preparations fell into the bridegroom's hands.

He ordered me to seduce you and to flee with you as lovers do,

so that when he leads his bride here, you won't be an obstacle for

them.

I was to be the made-to-order lover,

but that terrible face of yours keeps tender passion down.

Forgive me, please forgive me.

Oiwa (*strengthening her resolve*): Now all that is left to me is suffering and death. But while I still have breath, I must go and thank Master Kihai properly. (*She stands unsteadily and begins to stagger to the front door.*)

TAKUETSU: No, no! If you go out looking like that, people will think you're a madwoman. (*Pushes her back*) Your clothing is torn and—your face—the stops and inadvertently looks up at her face, shrieks, and looks down. They are just at the spot where the mirror is still lying on the floor. Takuetsu and Oiwa are transfixed by the horrible image in the mirror.)

Oiwa (*takes the mirror and looks carefully*):

How frightful—the hair of the woman in the mirror.

I must blacken my teeth as married women do.

Then I must dress my hair.

I must look proper to give Kihai and Oume, parent and child, one small word of thanks.

(*Quietly*) Bring me my tooth blackening.

TAKUETSU: But you're still sick and weak. You've just given birth. It's not safe for you to go out.

Oiwa: It's quite all right. Bring my tooth blackening quickly.

TAKUETSU: But—

Oiwa (*firmly*): I said, bring it right now.

TAKUETSU (*startled by her firmness*): Yes. (*A singer accompanied by a shamisen begins singing a plaintive song. Takuetsu brings the lantern, a large metal container, and a stick of blackening. Oiwa sets up the mirror on a stand and sits down in the center of the main room. She rinses her mouth, wipes her teeth dry, and then applies the blackening.⁸ She messily covers the corners of her mouth, which makes it look as though her mouth is monstrously wide. The baby, who has been sleeping in the other room, starts to cry. Takuetsu tries to comfort him and put him to sleep. Takuetsu clears away the utensils while Oiwa spreads some paper on the floor and takes her comb from her kimono.*)

Oiwa (*singing*):

My precious comb, all that is left from my mother.

After my death, this comb must go to my sister, Osode.

This is my one remaining wish.

My father, my husband, my sister, and I

all are tied together by bonds thousandfold.

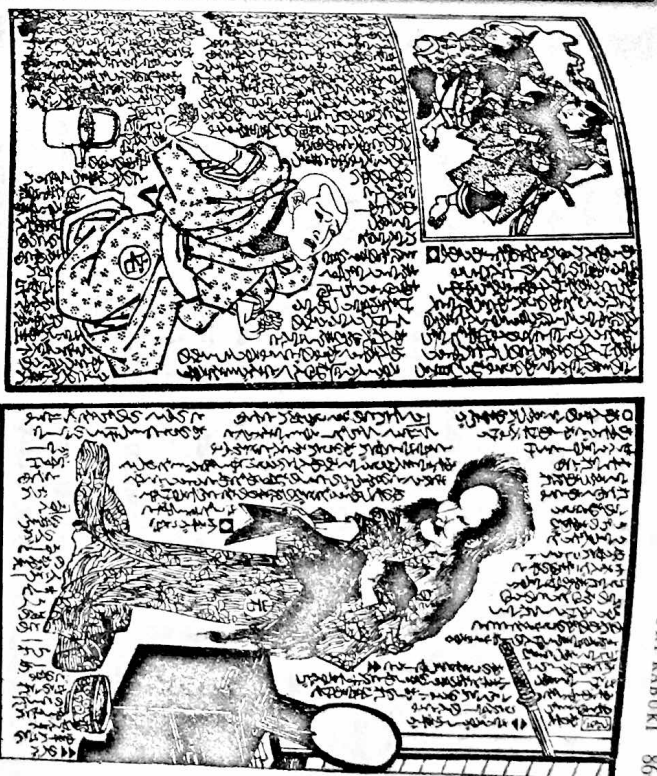
As I dream of the one thing I can do for my sister,

let the teeth of this comb pass through my hair

and straighten out its tangled strands.

(*Oiwa has Takuetsu cut the cord holding her hair in place. She sweeps her hair forward over her head and begins combing it. Hair comes out in great*

8. It was customary for married women to blacken their teeth, but Oiwa has not done this since giving birth.



Oiwa stands in front of a dressing table, her hair disheveled and her swollen face fully exposed, tying her sash with a determined look. She has turned away from her dressing table, where she has just blackened her teeth using the mirror and ceramic bowl at her feet. The end of Kohai's sword sticks out from the pillar behind her. The small cartouche (upper left) shows the next scene, in which Lemon slays Kohai.

handfuls.⁹ The hair piles up on the floor. When Oiwa sweeps her hair back, her hairline has receded considerably, leaving the grotesque swelling above her right eye totally exposed. This action is emphasized by *doro-doro* drum patterns, which suggest strange occurrences. She drops the comb on the pile of hair.)

Every moment is uncertain, as the end comes for Oiwa.

But one thing is sure, the moment I die he will marry that girl.

I can see the scene right before my eyes.

Now I have nothing but hatred for you, Lemon,

and hate for the house of Kihai, hatred for the Ito family.

None of you shall ever escape to a life of peace.

The more I think about it

the more my heart is filled with bitter, bitter hatred.

9. This is a grotesque parody of a kabuki tradition in which scenes of combing hair (*kamisite*), often with a woman dressing her lover's hair, are intimate and erotic moments.

(She picks up the pile of hair and tries to go to the door, but Taketsu stops her, pushing her back with the standing screen. Oiwa's face twists with fury and she begins to wring her bundle of hair. Blood drips from the hair onto the white screen in front of her. Clappers strike to emphasize the dripping of blood.)

TAKETSU (seeing the blood and shaking): Ahh, ah, ah, alh. She's squeezing blood from her hair.

OIWA: My fury will not rest until it reaches its goal!

TAKETSU: Oiwa, please, please! (He grabs Oiwa and tries to stop her, unintentionally letting go of her and sending her tottering into the room at stage left. Oiwa tries to reenter the main room and accidentally cuts her throat on Kohei's sword stuck in a pillar. She gestures with painful spasms, emphasized by the sharp clanging of a prayer bell. Finally, she collapses on the floor and dies.)

TAKETSU (shaking): Oh no, no. Kohei's sword was there. I wanted to stop her, but not like this. Oh, oh, how awful, awful. (Doro-doro drum patterns and the *nō* flute played breathlessly produce an eerie effect. A red appeara and tries to tug at the baby.¹⁰ Taketsu shoos it away. A green spirit flame floats near Oiwa's body.) I can't stay here any longer! (The terrified Taketsu runs out the front door, continually slipping and falling in his haste. Lemon enters the runway dressed in a magnificent formal costume and runs into Taketsu.)

LEMON: It's my good masseur. How did it go? Did you run away with Oiwa? Did things go according to plan?

TAKETSU: Uh, uh. You ordered me to do that, but it just didn't work.

LEMON: Then she hasn't gone away yet? What a useless old fool you are! I just came from the marriage ceremony at the Itō mansion. I was sure you would have taken her away by now. Tonight they are bringing over the new bride.

If Oiwa is still in there, it will be a problem. This is awful!

TAKETSU: It was awful, awful. That rat was awful! (He shivers and exits.)

LEMON (looking after him): That idiot went off just babbling about some rat without telling me what happened. Who can I use in his place as an excuse for chasing Oiwa out? Wait, I know. I'll turn my servant Kohei into her lover and drive the two of them out. In any case, tonight Oume will be coming (Reaches the front door) Oiwa, where are you? Oiwa, Oiwa. (Notices the crying baby on the floor and jumps in surprise)¹¹ One more step and I would have crushed him. Oiwa, Oiwa! (Picks up the crying baby) Hey, Oiwa. (She

her body) Oh, oh. This is Oiwa with Kohei's rusty old sword in her throat. Did he kill her? But he was in the closet. (He puts the baby down, opens the closet, and pulls out Kohei.) He's still tied up just as before, then he didn't. . . . In any case, he'll get the blame for killing Oiwa. (He unties Kohei.)

KOHEI: Master, you're a real monster.

KOHEI: What the hell are you talking about?

LEMON: You may have bound my hands and gagged me, but I know that Kohei: You may have bound my hands and gagged me, but I know that bounding Oiwa to death in that miserable way was all your doing. Taketsu told Oiwa everything about the plot between you and your neighbor Kihei. He told her about the poison that disfigured her. How could you drive out your wife at a time like this, all for your own advancement? Do you really think you can get ahead that way? You're the lowest scum!

LEMON: Shut up! Peasant! Oiwa was killed with your sword. You killed her. You killed your master's wife. You killed her!

KOHEI: That's insane! I was tied and gagged. How could I?

LEMON (shouting): But look! Your hands are moving now. You must have killed Oiwa! Murderer! (Lemon refuses to listen to Kohei. They continue to argue. Kohei suggests that he be given the medicine in return for being labeled a murderer. Lemon refuses.)

LEMON: I have no choice. You're Oiwa's enemy, and I must avenge her death. You killed her, so you're a murderer. Anyway, how could I let you live after you heard about our plot? Here, go on to the next world, with the help of my sword. (Strikes him. They struggle in a stylized, dance-like manner. Lively music plays as they fight, posing dramatically from time to time. Kohei defends himself desperately, throwing everything he can get his hands on, including umbrellas. Finally, wounded in several places, Kohei clings to lemon.)

KOHEI: I guess even during just one night's employ, if one fights with one's master—

LEMON: Justice strikes you with your master's sword. That's why I'm killing you, slowly. You are Oiwa's enemy! Die! (After a struggle, Kohei collapses to the sounds of a Buddhist wooden gong. Chobei, Kanzo, and, later, Banskue enter down the runway. After being told what has happened, they carry the bodies out the back door. Stately entrance music is played for a grand procession up the runway. Kihei, dressed in a formal coat and divided skirts, leads Oume by the hand. Behind them, Oumaki is accompanied by two servants bearing silk bedding and a six-section folding screen. They arrive at the front door.)

KIHEI (slightly tipsy from the wedding sake): Master Lemon, Master Lemon. It's Kihei.

LEMON: Well, well, good sir. You're here already with Oume. Come in, come in.

OUME: Oh please, wait. We have been married as you promised, but I feel funny moving right into your house so soon.

10. The rat represents Oiwa's spirit, since she was born in the year of the rat. In the original version, this was a more elaborate scene with a cat, thought to be able to raise the spirit of the dead, appearing and then being pursued and killed by a huge rat.

11. In early performances, several puppet rats would enter. The first one would grab the baby's clothing and tug, and the others would line up, each grabbing the tail of the one in front. The would attempt to carry off the baby, but Lemon would chase them away.

KIHEI: Don't worry. Lemon made a mistake by not having anyone to look after Oiwa, but fortunately, we're all one family. Even if it does go a little after samurai practice to bring everything over before we've had a little ageing money, we brought the screen and the bedding anyway. Don't worry.

OMAKI: You are undoubtedly right, but remember how young the girl is. She hasn't come of age yet.

KIHEI: I say not to worry! *(He pulls Oume into the house, and they all sit down.)* By the way, Lemon, is it true about Oiwa and you know who?

LEMON: When I told you about it at the wedding, I had the wrong man. It was actually my servant Kohei who was having an affair with her. When the two were discovered, she ran off with her lover, leaving her baby behind. Oume, tonight, if my new father-in-law will allow it, I would like you to stay here.

KIHEI: Ah, so she did have another man? Among samurai, that sort of thing just will not do. But as far as we are concerned, the timing was perfect. Congratulations!

OMAKI: I'm sure you are right, but I'm surprised that she left the house when she was still so sick. Well, I guess that certainly is a marvel. But what are you going to do about the little boy?

LEMON: That really is a problem.

KIHEI: Well, for that very reason, I'll stay here starting tonight and help you out. Early tomorrow morning, the nurse will come and help too. Omake, spread out my bed.

OMAKI: As you wish. *(She spreads out the bedding at stage right and puts the large folding screen around it.)* Master, I've prepared your bed over here.

KIHEI: Then where will the young couple sleep?

LEMON: Let's use my old bed. It will serve that faithless old wife of mine right.

KIHEI: Of course, what a fine idea. Here Oume, this is your good luck charm. Take care to keep it around your neck. *(He hands her a red charm.)*

OUOME: I'll never let go of it. I'm scared of Oiwa.

OMAKI: I know you are, but put her out of your head, at least while you are in your wedding bed.

LEMON: Don't worry about it. Who would dare to say anything against people as important as we are?

OMAKI: No, no. Of course, no one could object. Now here you go. *(Takes Oume by the hand and leads her to the bed in the room at stage left.)* Tonight your wishes will come true at last.

OUOME: I know you're right, but when I remember that for my sake, poor Oiwa...

OMAKI: Now hush or your wishes won't come true. *(She closes the sliding doors. The baby starts to cry.)*

LEMON: What a time for the kid to...

KIHEI: Ah ha. I may not be able to give any milk, but tonight I'll be the child's wet nurse. I'll keep him with me tonight. *(He picks up the baby, cradles him and retires to the bed at stage right.)*

Father-in-law, thank you for everything.

LEMON: What shall I do?

OMAKI: Go and tell my daughter that everything is all right here.

KIHEI: As you wish. Well, my deepest congratulations.

OMAKI: Good night, nurse.

LEMON: Enjoy your wedding night. *(To a lively song and the tolling of the temple bell, Omake, preceded by the servants carrying the lanterns, exits. Kihei closes the screen around his bed. Lemon, left alone, is pleased with the turn of events.)*

LEMON: Now it's off to the bridal bed with an innocent girl who's never done anything. Well, let's start her out right. *(Eerie flute music plays, and the temple bell tolls. Lemon enters the room at left and slides open the doors so the interior is visible to the audience.)* Oume, I'm sorry I've kept you waiting. Listen, my bride, there's no reason to stare at the floor. Even if you feel bashful, come, lift up your face. Tonight is the night that all your dreams come true. Here, look happy. Look at me, smile, and say, "Now you're my husband." *(He draws closer.)*

OUOME: Yes, Lemon, you are my husband. *(She lifts up her face. The red charm is around her neck, but the face is that of Oiwa. She glares with hatred at Lemon and cackles. Lemon picks up a sword from nearby, draws it, and strikes her, immediately closing the screen door behind him. The decapitated head of Oume falls to the floor. Rats come onstage and surround the head, accompanied by the sound of light doru-doru drum patterns.)*

LEMON *(looks closely at the face)*: Oh no, no. That was really Oume. I acted too quickly! *(Still holding the sword, he runs over to the screen at right and pulls it aside. Inside, Kihei is sitting up, his face turned away from the audience. He is wearing a thick padded jacket and is holding the baby, his mouth stained from eating the baby. Lemon goes over to him.)* Father-in-law! Father-in-law! Something terrible has happened. By mistake... *(Kihei turns his head: it is Kohei who is eating the baby. Kohei glares at Lemon.)*

KOHEI: Master, give me the medicine.

LEMON: Oh no! You're Kohei! And now you're killing the baby! *(Lemon cuts off Kohei's head. The blood-stained head of Kihei falls on the floor. A snake emerges from Kihei's hips, crawling toward the head and coiling around it.¹² Lemon looks closely.)* That was really my father-in-law. I can't stay in this cursed place! *(He runs to the front door. With one hand, he grabs his collar as though pushing away some unseen force that is tugging him back. With the other hand, he reaches forward desperately in the direction he wants to go. This movement is punctuated by a doru-doru drum pattern. He pushes away whatever it is and starts running again, only to be stopped. The forward and backward movements alternate with increasing rapidity until Lemon is stand-*

12. The snake is an incarnation of the spirit of Kohei, who was born in the year of the snake.



Lemon is caught between the vengeful spirits of Kohbei (left) and Ojima (right), both of whom are legless and wear white robes, a characteristic depiction of Japanese ghosts in the Edo period. The dead bodies of Kohbei and Ojima lie face down in pools of blood at Lemon's feet.

Lemon's household

Ojima, a nurse in the Kohbei's household, married to Lemon, mistakenly killed by Lemon.

Ojima, Kohbei's widowed daughter and mother of Oume

Ojima, or Deadman's Ditch, a river near a temple crematorium in the Ohshori district of Edo. The river flows in front of a steep grassy dike with *fukigawa* district of Edo. The scene opens to shamisen music a dry riverbed on the left and right sides. The scene opens to shamisen music called "Zen no tsutome," which is used for scenes with a funeral, Buddhist atmosphere. A prayer bell is also striking. Ojima, the widowed daughter of Kohbei and the mother of the recently deceased Oume, and Ojima, the wet nurse of the Ito family, have been reduced to the status of beggars and are in ragged clothing, though retaining some air of their previous status. Ojima has a bag of rice around her neck. Even though her mistress is now a penniless beggar, Ojima continues to serve her faithfully. They are on the dry land in front of the dike to the left. A small tripod holds a pot over a fire. Ojima is ill, and Ojima rubs her back to comfort her.

Ojima: Ojima-sama, how are you feeling today?

Ojima: Please don't worry about me. Today I feel much better. The only thing that worries me is that we still don't know where Tamiya Lemon is. What could have made him kill my father and daughter? To return all our generosity with murder is inhuman. It's an outrage, Ojima.

Ojima: You're right. All because the Ito clan tried to welcome a worthless man as son-in-law, the family has been destroyed and the mansion possessed by Lord Moronao. Even though we've been reduced to being outcasts, we're searching for Lemon to avenge the destruction of our family. I am only one person, but I'm pleased to serve you faithfully. Ojima-sama, please take heart and don't despair.

Ojima: You haven't forgotten the past and are so kind that for me you're not a servant, you're part of my family. (She takes out an amulet.) My daughter Oume kept this amulet next to her heart all the time. That she forgot the amulet when she went to Lemon's house was perhaps a sign that she would die so horribly. The more I think about it, the more I'm determined that Lemon be punished properly for his evil acts.

Ojima: Please don't dwell on it. Why don't you pray for your father and daughter, and I'll start boiling the rice for dinner. (The shamisen music continues and is joined by the pounding of a wooden gong. The steady pounding of a large drum suggests the flow of the river. Ojima scoops up water from the river and washes the rice and then puts it in the pot to boil. Meanwhile, Ojima hangs the amulet bag from the tripod and prays fervently to it. Magobei, the father of the deceased Kohbei, appears on the runway. He carries a soba, long, thin wooden plaque that was a kind of grave marker. He seems to be gazing at the river looking for something. He sees the two women.)

ing in one place, desperately trying to move. Finally, he is pulled back into the house, spins in a circle, and sits down hard in the middle of the floor. Green spirit flames float in the air in front of Lemon as he stiffens and shouts. You spiteful spirits! (The clacking of the wooden clappers begins to mark the end of the act.) Hail Amida Buddha, Hail Amida Buddha, Hail Amida Buddha . . . (Two green spirit flames hover in the air. Lemon clasps his hands together, praying fervently as the curtain is pulled shut.)

Act 3, Deadman's Ditch

MAIN CHARACTERS

CHŌBEI (AKIYAMA), a rōnin, Lemon's crony
LEMON (TAMIYA), a masterless samurai, marries into Kohbei's family
KIHAI (ITO), samurai in service of Kō no Moronao, grandfather of Oume, mistakenly killed by Lemon

KOHBEI, Lemon's servant, killed by Lemon

MAGŌBEI, the father of Kohbei

NAOSUKE, a masterless samurai married to Ojima, Ojima's sister, calls himself

Ojima, now an eel fisherman

Ojima, Lemon's wife, accidentally kills herself after being disfigured

OKUMA, Lemon's mother

MAGOBEL (*to himself*): There are some beggars who look like they come from much better circumstances. (*Calls to them*) Excuse me. Are you living here next to the river? By any chance have you seen a wooden door float by with the bodies of a man and a woman attached to it?

OYUMI: I don't believe that there have been any bodies like that, have there?

OMAKI: No, there haven't been. Why do you ask?

MAGOBEL: Please listen to my story. My son Kohiei served in a samurai mansion, but he ran away and disappeared. I heard today that a door with the bodies of a man and a woman was spotted floating in the river. I was afraid that might be my son. But if I go home and tell his wife and son, they would just start to grieve again. The only thing I could do was to go to the Reigan Temple and ask for funeral prayers to be said for my son and to have this funeral plaque made. If he is still alive, all is well, but if he is already dead, this plaque will help to ease his spirit.

OYUMI (*hearing Magobei's story, Oyumi becomes emotional*): How terribly sad. Everywhere it's the same tragedy.

OMAKI: Oyumi-sama, you've been praying to this amulet in memory of Kiba and Oume, but perhaps this makes it impossible for you to forget unpleasant events. Why don't I do this. (*She takes the amulet*) Tomorrow, I'll go to the Reigan Temple and give the amulet to the priests and have them pray for your father and daughter.

OYUMI: Perhaps you're right. As long as I have this amulet, I can't forget Oume. Please go and dedicate this amulet to the temple.

OMAKI: I will. As soon as evening comes, let us go visit the temple. Omdai puts down the amulet. The pounding of the drum suggests the rattling of wooden shutters in the wind. There is a rustling in the grass, and a rat appears and takes the amulet. The two women cry out in shock.)

OYUMI: That rat ran away with the amulet.

OMAKI: Where did that rat come from? (*They chase after the rat, and it jumps into the river.*) It took the amulet into the river. (*Omdai tries to recover the amulet, but the ground is soft and slippery.*)

OYUMI: Watch out! (*Oyumi tries to hold onto Omdai and grabs her obi sash, but the obi rips apart in her hands and Omdai falls into the river, accompanied by a loud boom of the drum suggesting a splash.* Oyumi falls on the ground holding the torn-off section of the obi, and she passes out from the shock. Magobei rushes to her and tries to help her.)

MAGOBEL: Madam! Madam! Are you all right? (*Muses on what he has just seen*) I never thought that a single rat could pull a human being into a river, but that maid fell in and drowned. Now the other woman has passed out. What a terrible thing. (*He is torn between staying to help and wanting to go on with his search.*) But I don't want to get involved in the troubles of a couple of beggars. All the same, I don't want to abandon them either. (*He decides to go.*) I do not know who you are, but I hope you recover. (*He*

a red raincoat on the ground and covers Oyumi with it. He picks up the soboba again and, mumbling prayers for Oyumi's well-being, leaves. Lively shamisen music called "Tsukuda bushi" suggests boats on the Sumida River, while the pounding of the drum suggests the flow of the river.)

Naosuke, a ronin married to Osode, appears. In act 1, Naosuke fell in love with Osode, Omdai's sister, and to make her his own, he killed a man whom he thought was Sato Yomoshichi, her lover. At the same time, Tamaya Lemon, who was pursuing Oiwa, killed Yomoshichi's father, Samon Yotsuya. Naosuke and Lemon subsequently work together. Lemon promised Oiwa to find and kill the murderer of her father, while Naosuke promised Osode to avenge the deaths of her father and her lover. There is also a connection to the story of Chushingura, since Oiwa and Osode's father, Samon, was a member of Lord Enri's clan, and Sato Yomoshichi is also one of the loyal retainers hoping to find an opportunity to attack Lord Kō no Moronao and avenge their lord's death.

Now Naosuke calls himself Gonbei, a name that in the Edo period meant "a person not worthy of note," also suggesting Naosuke Gonbei, the name of a retainer-servant who became notorious for betraying and killing his lord. Naosuke is currently an eel fisherman and wears tight-fitting dark blue trousers and a long, persimmon-colored coat. There is a basket for his catch at his waist, and he carries a three-pronged rake with a long handle used for catching eels. Even though Naosuke wears common work clothes, the cut and color of his costume make him look sharp and stylish, the epitome of Tsuruya Namboku's villainous heroes.¹³

NAOSUKE (*stops and speaks on the runway*): There's never been a year for fishing that's been as bad as this one. The water seems good and muddy over here, just right for eels. Well, let's start fishing. (*He wades into the river and starts fishing for eels. Finally he fishes up a clump of hair tangled around Oiwa's comb.*) Ugh. My rake fished up a clump of hair. (*He's about to throw it away but looks more closely and sees the comb.*) This comb is tortoiseshell. Let's wash it. (*He climbs back onto the riverbank and wipes the mud and hair off of the comb with some dry grass. He sits on a rock on the riverbed, gets out his pipe, and has a smoke. Meanwhile, to the accompaniment of quiet shamisen music, Lemon and his mother, Okuma, appear on the runway. Okuma, an old woman in a plain kimono, carries a soboba. Lemon, in a black silk-crested kimono, wears a large basket-like straw hat that completely conceals his face. He carries a fishing pole and tackle. The two go to the middle of the dike.*)

LEMON: Mother, I'm glad to see that you're safe and healthy.

¹³ At the time of the first performance, there had been a sensational incident in which an eel fisherman had discovered the bodies of a man and a woman floating in the Onbōbōri River.

OKUMA: Iemon, after hearing all these rumors, I've been worried about you. I couldn't be happier to have met you here. As you know, I left your father Genshiro and then went to serve as a maid in the mansion of Lord Moronao. I helped the lord seduce Lady Kaoyo, but that silly foster father ruined everything and her silly husband attacked Lord Moronao. At the time Lord Moronao was thankful for everything that I did and said that if I ever needed anything, I should just come to him. (She takes out a document wrapped carefully in a cloth, unwraps it, and gives it to Iemon.) This document is from Lord Moronao. I knew that you had become a masterless samurai, so I asked for this to get you out of trouble. But I couldn't do anything with it, since my current husband is a servant of a retainer of the Enya household, Lord Moronao's enemy. Then I heard that a masterless samurai named Iemon killed his wife and the people next door. So I thought up this trick to protect you. (Holds out the sobodai) If I had a Buddhist name put on this grave marker, no one would know that it was you. So I had the priest write, "In life, his name was Tamiya Iemon." This way, everyone will think that you're dead. How about that! It still takes a lot to outsmart your old mother.

IEMON: Mother, I'm extremely grateful for all your kindness. But I've already made sure that my fellow samurai Kanzō and his retainer take the blame for the killings. Nothing is likely to touch me. But if it will make you feel better, let's just put up this grave marker here. (He sticks it into a clump of grass on top of the dike.)

OKUMA: Let's do that. This dike is the perfect place for it. If you want to see me, I'm living near all the temples in Fukagawa, with a poor man named Hotoke Magobei. Be sure to visit.

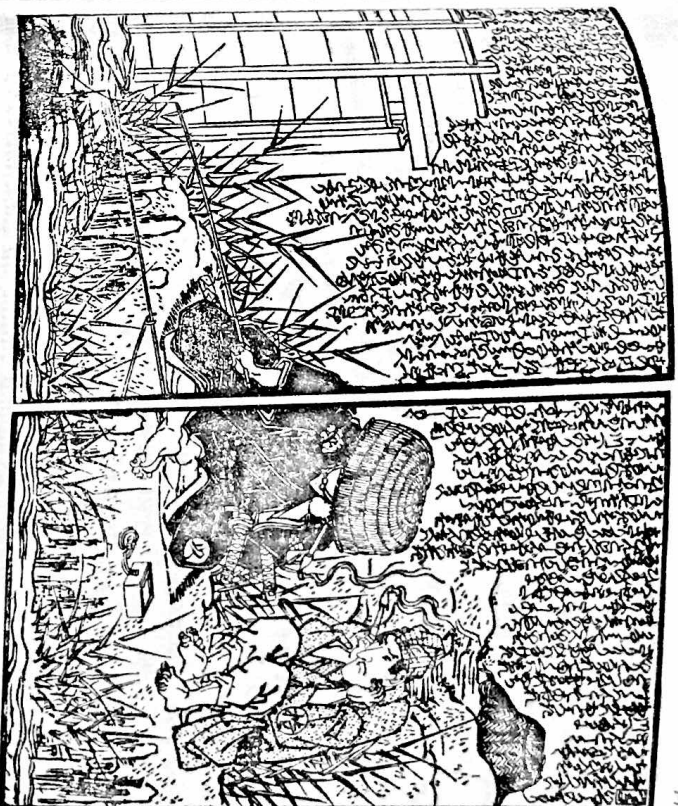
IEMON: Mother, I'll be sure to visit you soon. (Shamisen music with the dull thumping of a wooden Buddhist gong. Okuma exits. Naosuke has been listening from below. From the top of the dike, Iemon looks at the river.) This looks like a good place to fish. (He gets out his fishing pole, drops the line into the river, and plants the pole in the ground so that it sticks out over the edge of the dike. He gets out his pipe, but then realizes that he doesn't have anything to light it with. He notices Naosuke smoking on the riverbank below.) Excuse me, could you give me a light?

NAOSUKE: Here you are. (He takes Iemon's pipe and puts the bowls of the two pipes together. As the two pose, one above, the other below, it creates a handsome image. Naosuke peeks under Iemon's hat and speeds in a light but somewhat menacing tone.) Hey Iemon, it's been a while, hasn't it?

IEMON (warily): Is that you, Naosuke?

NAOSUKE: Yeah, I'm Naosuke, but I go by the name Gonbei now. Iemon, you're the murderer of my sister-in-law.

IEMON (startled): Are you joking? What are you talking about? NAOSUKE (in the grand tones of heroes in a kabuki history play): Iemon,



Iemon and Naosuke smoke pipes and fish at the embankment next to a wooden water gate. Iemon, in a black silk-crested kimono and armed with two swords, sits on a straw mat and holds a fishing rod. A large, basket-shaped straw hat conceals his identity. Naosuke, dressed as an eel fisherman with a cotton cloth (*tenu-gui*) around his head, crouches beside him. A straw basket for Naosuke's catch sits on the upper dike.

how could you forget! My wife's older sister is Oiwa. My wife is her younger sister Osode. That means that we are enemies and that I must avenge the death of my wife's sister. How fortunate to meet here. Prepare for your death, Tamiya Iemon. Stand and we'll fight it out here. (Switches to a conversational tone) That's what I should say, but I'm not going to. But I overheard you talking about that document from Kō no Moronao. When you find success, I'll pay you a little visit to take my share. When I come, don't say that you're not at home.

IEMON: Of course not. That'll be perfect for me. The moment I find success...

NAOSUKE: If you plant the seeds, then Gonbei will dig them up. I'll be by to see you soon.¹⁴

IEMON: I understand. How fortunate for things to be settled this way. (There is a tug on the fishing line, and Iemon pulls up a small fish.)

¹⁴ This is a play on the popular saying that "If Gonbei plants seeds, the crows will dig them up."

NAOSUKE: You caught something. (Lemon throws the line in again and almost immediately catches a large fish. He pulls it onto the dike, where it flops vigorously.) It's getting away. (Naosuke grabs the soboba with lemon's name on it and uses it to hold the fish down. After Lemon has the fish, Naosuke tosses the soboba toward the river, but it falls right by Oyumi and revives her. She picks up the soboba and is shocked when she reads the name on it.)

OYUMI: Oh no! Tamiya Lemon's grave marker! That means that the killer of my father and daughter must already be dead. (Hearing her voice, Lemon tries to make himself inconspicuous. He tugs at Naosuke's sleeve and signals for him to speak for him.)

OYUMI: Excuse me, I wish to ask you something.

NAOSUKE: What is it?

OYUMI: The name on this grave marker is Tamiya Lemon. Do you know whether he died of illness?

NAOSUKE (without thinking, answers carelessly): What? Tamiya Lemon? He's not dead, he's right . . . (Lemon tugs at his sleeve and urgently signals for him to say that Lemon is dead. Immediately Naosuke changes his tone.) I mean he's dead. Of course he's dead. Look, because he's dead, his family put up this grave marker. Nobody goes around putting up grave markers for living people. He's dead. (In a burst of enthusiasm) Dead, dead, dead!

OYUMI: When did he die?

NAOSUKE: When? Um . . . today, er, that is, today marks forty-nine days since his death.

OYUMI: What, forty-nine days have already passed since he died. Oh no! (Weeps bitterly)

NAOSUKE: To be crying and carrying on like that, you must be family or something.

OYUMI: No, Tamiya Lemon killed my father and daughter. Even though I am only a woman, I've been searching for him to avenge the deaths in my family. But now there is no hope left for me, since the murderer has died peacefully. (Lemon writes instructions to Naosuke on how to respond.)

NAOSUKE: But listen, even if by some chance Tamiya Lemon were alive, he's not the one that killed your father and daughter.

OYUMI: What? Who is it?

NAOSUKE: The real killers are Chōbei, Kanzo, and his retainer Banuke. These three men are the real killers.

OYUMI: But those are the three men that served as go-betweens when Lemon married my daughter Oume. Why did they turn on us like that? Those ingrates. Outrageous! (She speaks passionately. Meanwhile, Lemon sneaks up behind her and unceremoniously kicks her into the river. There is the boom of a drum, suggesting the splash as she falls in. Lemon takes off his hat and poses staring at the water. This is the first time the audience sees his face in this scene.)

NAOSUKE (impressed with the casual way that Lemon killed Oyumi): Lemon, you're a real villain indeed.

LEMON: I learned it all from you.

NAOSUKE: I'm ashamed to hear it. But now I'm nothing more than a crooked eel fisherman. In the end, my body will be split lengthwise, just like that of an eel.

LEMON: Even if my head is cut off, I'll keep moving anyway.

NAOSUKE: Nice! (As Naosuke leaves, he keeps an eye on Lemon. As the music fades, there is the gloomy sound of a temple bell, indicating that night is approaching. Lemon is left alone on stage.)

LEMON: Just because that woman showed up where she had no business being, I was forced to take a life needlessly. (There is a tug on his fishing pole, and he pulls up the line immediately, but there is nothing on it.) Damn, the fish swam away with the bait. (Lemon puts some more bait on the line and drops it into the river again. To shamisen music, Chōbei comes rushing along the runway, in the somewhat ragged robes of a masterless samurai. But now his hair is rather messed up, and he wears a light blue cloth tied as a hood to hide his face. He sees Lemon and shouts at him.)

CHŌBEI: There you are Lemon, I've found you!

LEMON: Shh.

CHŌBEI (in a quieter voice): You killed Oiwa and Kohei and then killed Itō Khei and his granddaughter. But you put all the blame on the three of us. You have made three innocent men into murderers. The only way that we can clear our names is to go to the authorities and report your crimes. The real murderer is Tamiya Lemon. This is the only way we can escape. You can't complain about that. I've explained our situation, and now I am leaving.

LEMON: Listen, how could you forget all that I've done for you in the past? Don't worry about all that. As they say, gossip lasts for only seventy-five days. If you just stay put, things will clear up eventually.

CHŌBEI: That's easy enough for you to say, but we are the ones who will suffer. We've decided to go away and lie low for a while, but we need some travel money.

LEMON: I would like to give you something, but I'm scraping by myself.

CHŌBEI: In that case, do you want us to turn you in?

CHŌBEI: Don't do that!

LEMON: Then give me some money.

CHŌBEI: I want to, but . . .

LEMON: If not, I'm going to turn you in. What are you going to do about that?

CHŌBEI: Well . . .

CHŌBEI: Well . . .

BOTH: Well, well, well. (The exchange between the two becomes a kuni-age in which one character presses another for an answer. As the rhythm of the lines



Lemon flips over the wooden door to hide Oiwa's body, only to find Kohbei's body on the other side. The cross-eyed look expresses his astonishment. Kohbei, bound to the door, attends his right arm, asking for the medicine.



intensifies, it culminates in a series of "wells" spoken first alternately and then together.)

CHÔBEI: What are you going to do about it? (Lemon reconsiders and brings out the document that Okuma earlier gave to him.)

LEMON: This document that my mother got me guarantees my future with Lord Moronao. For the time being, I will give it to you and, as soon as I get the money, I'll exchange it for this document. Listen (Whispers).

CHÔBEI: Got it. For the time being, I will keep this instead of cash.

LEMON: I'll pay you well when I can.

CHÔBEI: You'd better. See you later, Tamiya.

LEMON: Akiyama.

CHÔBEI: Take good care of yourself. (Music. Temple bell. Carrying the document, Chôbei exits running along the runway. Lemon gazes after him.)

LEMON: Because Chôbei showed up, I had to hand over the valuable document just to keep his mouth shut. What terrible luck. (Looks up at the sky) It will be dark soon. I should put away my fishing pole. (Lerie music. Temple bell. He picks up his fishing pole. A wooden door with a body on it covered with straw mat comes floating down the river from stage left. When it reaches the center of the stage, it sinks in the water, then bobs up again and stands up



Lemon strikes Kohbei's body with his sword, turning it into a skeleton that slides into the river.



against the dike. Without thinking, Lemon approaches and takes the mat off the door. Doro-doro drums from the geza, the music room. The dead body of Oiwa appears. She is holding the amulet taken by the rat earlier in this scene. Then the corpse opens its eyes and glares at Lemon.) Oiwa, forgive me. I was wrong.

OIWA: My hatred will not rest until the whole bloodline of the Tamiya family is dead and every branch and leaf of Ito Kihai's clan has withered. (She holds out the amulet. Lemon cannot endure her gaze and covers the body with the straw mat again.)

LEMON: Hail Amida Buddha. Hail Amida Buddha. The passion of a woman never dies. Haven't you found salvation yet, Oiwa? Maybe if the crows consume her body, her sins will disappear and she will find rest. (Without thinking about it, he turns over the door. This side of the door is covered with a thick layer of water weeds.) Oh no, there is something on the other side too. (With soft mysterious drums, the water weeds drop, revealing Kohbei's body. Kohbei opens his eyes.)

KOHEI: Master, master, lend me the medicine. (He stares entreatingly at Lemon.)

LEMON: Another ghost!

Lemon draws his sword and strikes at the body. With doro-doro drums, the body immediately turns into a skeleton that falls apart and drops into the water.

Iemon releases his breath in relief but does not relax his defensive pose. With a loud clack from the tsuke clappers, several characters appear. From the shadow of the statue of Jizo, Naosuke appears holding his eel rake. The sluice gate below opens, and Yomoshichi (Osode's former lover, played by the same actor who plays Oiwa and Kohei) appears dressed in a colorful, handsome cotton kimono. He has a secret letter wrapped in oiled paper hanging from his neck and carries his swords wrapped in a straw mat. This is followed by a dammari, or fight in the dark. To slow, dreamy music, all the characters grope through the dark. Their dance-like movements reveal their personalities as they confront one another, and the objects they carry move from person to person. The problems created by the loss or discovery of these objects will motivate the plot of later acts. Iemon grabs the letter around Yomoshichi's neck, and the three of them fight over it. Then, when Naosuke holds out his eel rake, Iemon cuts at it with his sword and ends up with the head of the rake; Yomoshichi ends up with the handle of the rake, which has Naosuke's name "Gonbei" burned into it; and Naosuke ends up with the letter. All three take hold of Iemon's fishing basket, and suddenly, with a sudden flaring up of a spirit flame and mysterious drums, the basket turns into the face of Oiwa. They throw away the basket and part as the curtain is pulled shut to the continuous clapping of the ki clappers.

Curtain

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