

CHŌBEI: It would be a big mistake not to take what's on your plate.
KIHEI: 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.*)
KIHEI: Will you forgive me?
LEMON: I, I—
OYUMI: If you die, how can I protect this child all by myself?
LEMON: Well—
KIHEI: Then kill me!
LEMON: I, well . . .
KIHEI: I've done a monstrous thing.
OYUMI (*forcefully*): 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 Itō.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.*)

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. (*Shoves 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. Isn't 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 mosquitoes 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 fingernails 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 away.*)

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, 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 Takuetsu in tow.*)



Iemon 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.

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 Takuetsu'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 Takuetsu refuses.*)

TAKUETSU: Yes, I understand. (*After Iemon has exited*) What a mess I'm in 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 Kihei 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, Kihei's granddaughter Oume. She wanted Iemon to be her husband, but her family knew that Iemon already had a wife. Kihei 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, Kihei tricked you with this medicine. He thought that if your face 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 Itō Kihei.
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*):

lemon has run out of love for you.

As bridegroom of the house of Itō, 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 Kihei 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—(*He 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 Kihei and Oume, parent and child, one small word of thanks.

(*Quietly*) Bring me my tooth blackening.

AKUETSU: 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—

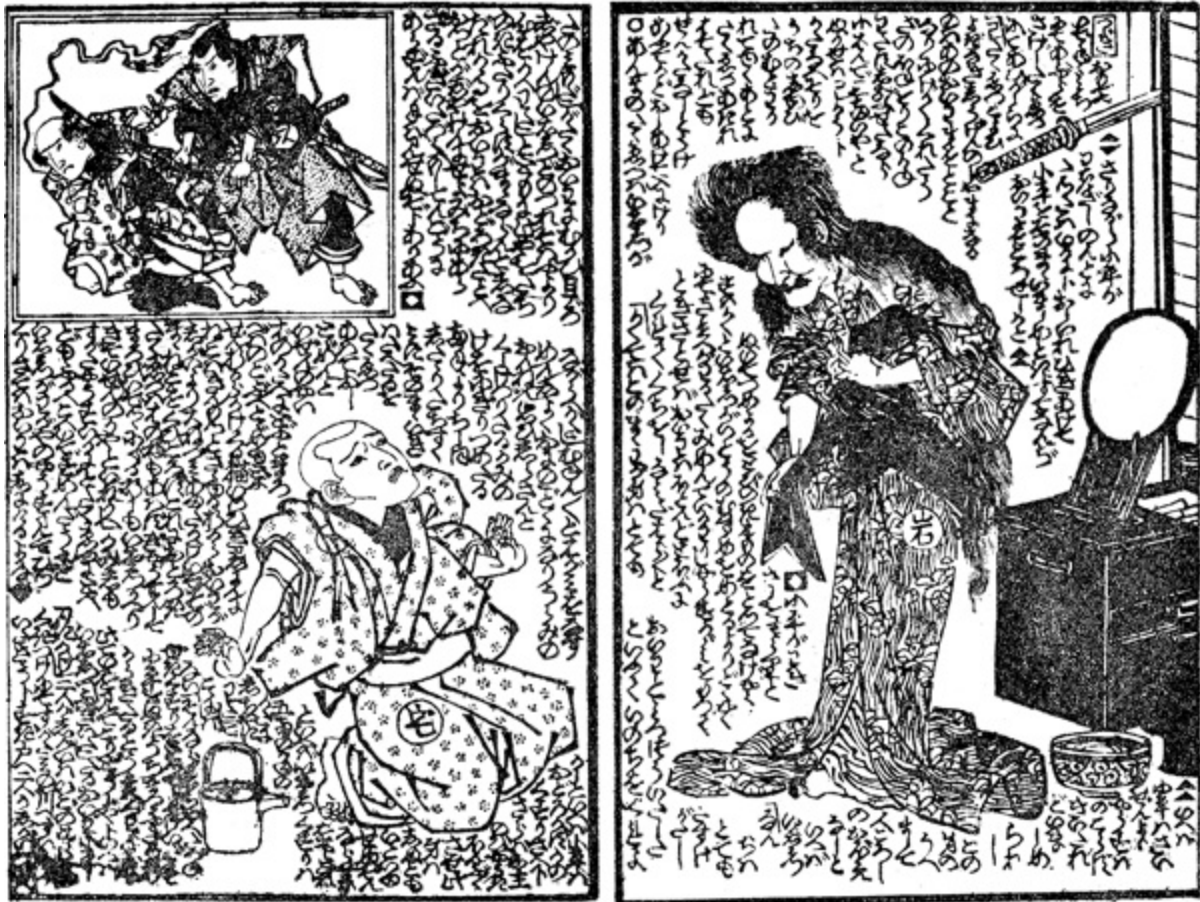
OIWA (*firmly*): I said, bring it right now.

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 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.*)



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 Kohei's sword sticks out from the pillar behind her. The small cartouche (*upper left*) shows the next scene, in which Iemon slays Kohei.

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, Iemon,
 and hate for the house of Kihei, hatred for the Itō 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.

She picks up the pile of hair and tries to go to the door, but Takuetsu 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.)

TAKUETSU (*seeing the blood and shaking*): Ahh, ah, ah, ahh. She's squeezing blood from her hair.

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

TAKUETSU: 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.*)

TAKUETSU (*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 rat appears and tries to tug at the baby.*¹⁰ *Takuetsu shoos it away. A green spirit flame floats near Oiwa's body.*) I can't stay here any longer! (*The terrified Takuetsu runs out the front door, continually slipping and falling in his haste. Iemon enters the runway dressed in a magnificent formal costume and runs into Takuetsu.*)

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

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

IEMON: 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!

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

IEMON (*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. (*Sees 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.

IEMON: What the hell are you talking about?

KOHEI: You may have bound my hands and gagged me, but I know that hounding Oiwa to death in that miserable way was all your doing. Takuetsu 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!

IEMON: 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?

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

IEMON: 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, dancelike 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 Iemon.*).

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

IEMON: 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. Chōbei, Kanzō, and, later, Bansuke 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, Omaki 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 saké*): Master Iemon, Master Iemon. It's Kihei.

IEMON: 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.

KIHEI: Don't worry. Iemon 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 against samurai practice to bring everything over before we've had a public ceremony, 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, Iemon, is it true about Oiwa and you know who?

IEMON: 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?

IEMON: 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. Omaki, 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.)*

OUME: 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.

OUME: 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.)*

LEMON: Father-in-law, thank you for everything.

OMAKI: What shall I do?

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

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

LEMON: Good night, nurse.

OMAKI: Enjoy your wedding night. *(To a lively song and the tolling of the temple bell, Omaki, 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.)*

OUME: Yes, Iemon, 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 Iemon and cackles. Iemon 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 doro-doro drum patterns.)*

IEMON *(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. Iemon 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 Iemon.)*

KOHEI: Master, give me the medicine.

IEMON: Oh no! You're Kohei! And now you're killing the baby! *(Iemon 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 Iemon 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 doro-doro 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 Iemon is standing 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 Iemon 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. Iemon clasps his hands together, praying fervently as the curtain is pulled shut.)



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

Act 3, Deadman's Ditch

MAIN CHARACTERS

CHŌBEI (AKIYAMA), a rōnin, Iemon's crony

IEMON (TAMIYA), a masterless samurai, marries into Kihei's family

KIHEI (ITŌ), samurai in service of Kō no Moronao, grandfather of Oume, mistakenly killed by Iemon

KOHEI, Iemon's servant, killed by Iemon

MAGOBEI, the father of Kohei

NAOSUKE, a masterless samurai married to Osode, Oiwa's sister;

calls himself Gonbei, now an eel fisherman
OIWA, lemon's wife, accidentally kills herself after being disfigured
OKUMA, lemon's mother
OMAKI, a nurse in the Kihei's household
OUME, Oyumi's daughter and Kihei's granddaughter, married to
lemon, mistakenly killed by lemon
OYUMI, Kihei's widowed daughter and mother of Oume

Onbōbori, or Deadman's Ditch, a river near a temple crematorium in the Fukagawa district of Edo. The river flows in front of a steep grassy dike with 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 funereal, Buddhist atmosphere. A prayer bell is also striking. Oyumi, the widowed daughter of Kihei and the mother of the recently deceased Oume, and Omaki, the wet nurse of the Itō family, have been reduced to the status of beggars and are in ragged clothing, though retaining some air of their previous status. Omaki has a bag of rice around her neck. Even though her mistress is now a penniless beggar, Omaki 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. Oyumi is ill, and Omaki rubs her back to comfort her.

OMAKI: Oyumi-sama, how are you feeling today?

OYUMI: 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, Omaki.

OMAKI: You're right. All because the Itō clan tried to welcome a worthless man as son-in-law, the family has been destroyed and the mansion repossessed 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. Oyumi-sama, please take heart and don't despair.

OYUMI: 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 Iemon's house was perhaps a sign that she would die so horribly. The more I think about it, the more I'm determined that Iemon be punished properly for his evil acts.

OMAKI: 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. Omaki scoops up water from the river and washes the rice and then puts it in the pot to boil. Meanwhile, Oyumi hangs the amulet bag from the tripod and prays fervently to it. Magobei, the father of the deceased Kohei, appears on the runway. He carries a sotoba, 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.*)

MAGOBEI (*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?

MAGOBEI: Please listen to my story. My son Kohei 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 Kihei 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. (*Omaki 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. (*Omaki tries to recover the amulet, but the ground is soft and slippery.*)

OYUMI: Watch out! (*Oyumi tries to hold onto Omaki and grabs her obi sash, but the obi rips apart in her hands and Omaki 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.*)

MAGOBEI: 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 sees a red raincoat on the ground and covers Oyumi with it. He picks up the sotoba 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 rōnin married to Osode, appears. In act 1, Naosuke fell in love with Osode, Oiwa's sister, and to make her his own, he killed a man whom he thought

was Sato Yomoshichi, her lover. At the same time, Tamiya Iemon, who was pursuing Oiwa, killed Oiwa's father, Samon Yotsuya. Naosuke and Iemon subsequently work together. Iemon 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 Chūshingura, since Oiwa and Osode's father, Samon, was a member of Lord Enya'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 Nanboku'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, Iemon and his mother, Okuma, appear on the runway. Okuma, an old woman in a plain kimono, carries a sotoba. Iemon, 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.

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 foster 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 stubborn woman 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 lemon.*) 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 lemon killed his wife and the people next door. So I thought up this trick to protect you. (*Holds out the sotoba*) 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 lemon." This way, everyone will think that you're dead. How about that! It still takes a lot to outsmart your old mother.

LEMON: 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.

LEMON: 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, lemon 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 lemon'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 lemon's hat and speaks in a light but somewhat menacing tone.*)

Hey lemon, it's been a while, hasn't it?

LEMON (*warily*): Is that you, Naosuke?

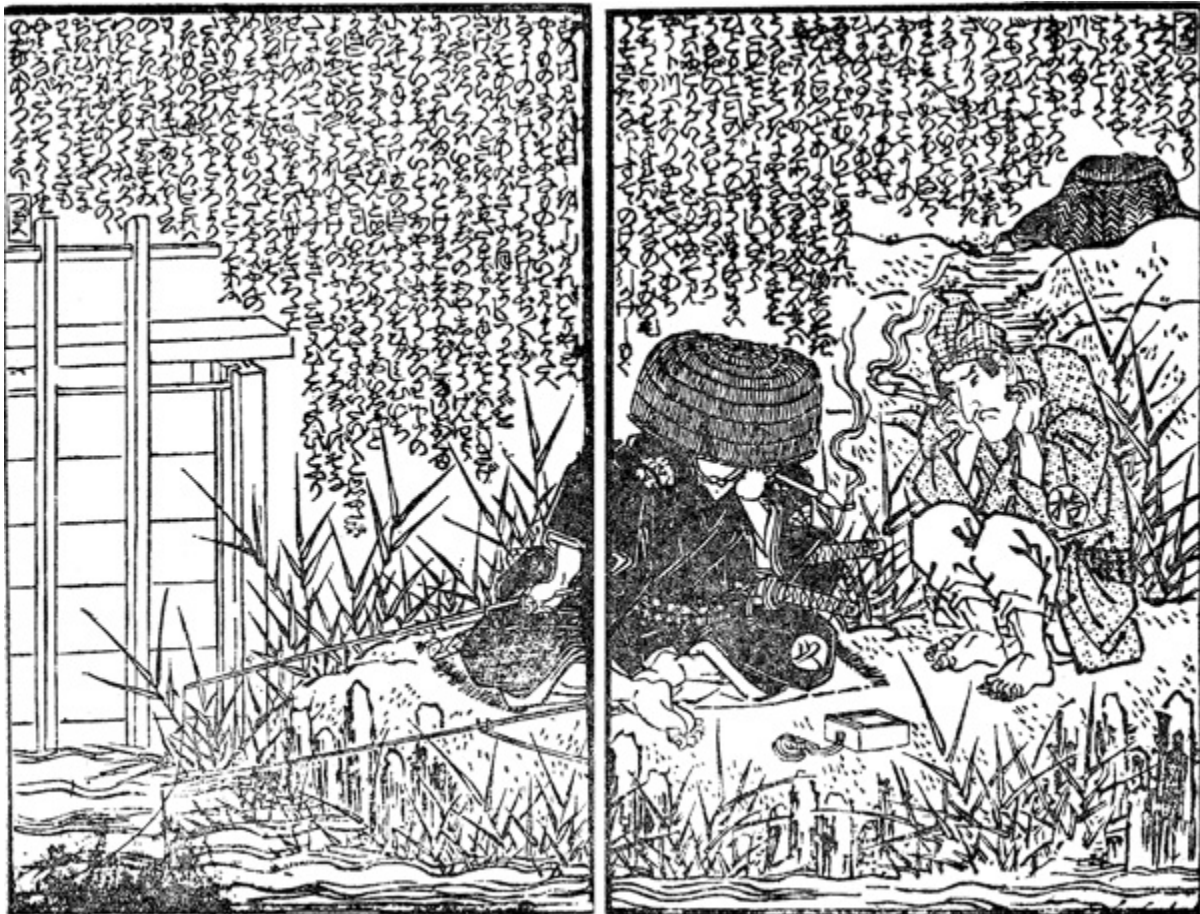
NAOSUKE: Yeah, I'm Naosuke, but I go by the name Gonbei now.

lemon, you're the murderer of my sister-in-law.

LEMON (*startled*): Are you joking? What are you talking about?

NAOSUKE (*in the grand tones of heroes in a kabuki history play*):

lemon, 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 lemon. 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.



lemon and Naosuke smoke pipes and fish at the embankment next to a wooden water gate. lemon, 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 (*tenugui*) around his head, crouches beside him. A straw basket for Naosuke's catch sits on the upper dike.

LEMON: 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

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

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 sotoba with lemon's name on it and uses it to hold the fish down. After lemon has the fish, Naosuke tosses the sotoba toward the river, but it falls right by Oyumi and revives her. She picks up the sotoba 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 Iemon 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. (*Iemon writes instructions to Naosuke on how to respond.*)

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

OYUMI: What? Who is it?

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

OYUMI: But those are the three men that served as go-betweens when Iemon married my daughter Oume. Why did they turn on us like that? Those ingrates. Outrageous! (*She speaks passionately. Meanwhile, Iemon 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. Iemon 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 Iemon killed Oyumi*): Iemon, 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 Iemon. As the music fades, there is the gloomy sound of a temple bell, indicating that night is approaching. Iemon 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.

(Iemon 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 Iemon and shouts at him.)

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

IEMON: Shh.

CHŌBEI *(in a quieter voice)*: You killed Oiwa and Kohei and then killed Itō Kihei 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 Iemon. This is the only way we can escape. You can't complain about that. I've explained our situation, and now I am leaving.

IEMON: 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.

IEMON: 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?

IEMON: Don't do that!

CHŌBEI: Then give me some money.

IEMON: I want to, but . . .

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

IEMON: Well . . .

CHŌBEI: Well . . .

BOTH: Well, well, well. *(The exchange between the two becomes a kuri-age in which one character presses another for an answer. As the rhythm of the lines intensifies, it culminates in a series of "wells" spoken first alternately and then together.)*



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

CHŌBEI: 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*).

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

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

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

LEMON: Akiyama.

CHŌBEI: Take good care of yourself. (*Music. Temple bell. Carrying the document, Chōbei exits running along the runway. lemon gazes after him.*)

LEMON: Because Chōbei 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. (*Eerie music. Temple bell. He picks up his fishing pole. A wooden door with a body on it covered with a 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 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.



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

OIWA: My hatred will not rest until the whole bloodline of the Tamiya family is dead and every branch and leaf of Itō Kihei'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 Kohei's body. Kohei 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. lemon 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. lemon grabs the letter around Yomoshichi's neck, and the three of them fight over it. Then, when Naosuke holds out his eel rake, lemon 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 lemon'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.



This woodblock print by Utagawa Toyokuni III (1786–1864) depicts the discovery of the bodies of Oiwa and Kohei at the dike. The actors portrayed here starred in the 1861 performance at the Nakamura Theater in Edo. In this triptych, the central images, of Kohei and Oiwa, can be interchanged by flipping a piece of paper. Playing Satō Yomoshichi (left) is Bandō HikosaburōV (1832–1877); Iemon, holding

the long sword and pulling up the door, is acted by Kataoka Nizaemon VIII (1810–1863); both Kohei and Oiwa, clutching an amulet and strapped to the door, are played by Bandō HikosaburōV; and Naosuke (Gonbei), carrying an eel rake from which a fishing basket is suspended, is acted by Seki Sanjūrō III (1805–1870). Phrases promoting the play, such as “big hit” and “great success”, are written on the wooden stupas in the background. (Courtesy of the National Theatre of Japan)

Curtain

[*Tōkaidō Yotsuya kaidan*, SNKS 45: 122–225, translated by Mark Oshima]

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).

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

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.

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

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 Iemon, this is perhaps the most attractive aspect of marrying Oume, even though Moronao was responsible for his former master's death.

6. Iemon announces that he will be adopted into the Itōclan and serve Lord Kō no Moronao, the enemy of his own master, Lord Enya. It was a common practice to adopt a son-in-law as one's heir.

7. Iemon has the gold coins he received from Kihei, but he is pawning Oiwa's possessions to get her to leave him of her own volition or at least to throw her into Takuetsu's arms.

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

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

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 spirits 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. They would attempt to carry off the baby, but Iemon would chase them away.

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

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 Onbōbori River.

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