

society, thus capturing a dark side of late Tokugawa 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 Heizō. 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 Story of a Foreign Country* (*Tenjiku Tokubei Ikokubanashi*, 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* (*Sakurahime azuma no bunshō*, 1817)<sup>1</sup> and *Ghost Stories at Yotsuya* (*Yotsuya kaidan*, 1825).

### **GHOST STORIES AT YOTSUYA** (YOTSUYA KAIDAN, 1825)

In his *Eastern Seaboard Highway Yotsuya Ghost Stories* (*Tōkaidō 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 *Chūshingura: The Storehouse of Loyal Retainers* (*Kanadehon Chūshingura*, 1748). Accordingly, in *Chūshingura*, 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 *Chūshingura*, 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.



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 most popular kabuki actors of the time suggests an imaginary production. Light enters from two large windows (*ryōmado*) near the ceiling flanking the stage roof (*hafu*). The “full house” (*ōiri*) sign hangs next to the tricolor curtain (*upper left*). The square earthen-floor pit (*doma*) 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)

If *Chūshingura* 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 *Chūshingura*, 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 *Chūshingura*, 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 Yomoshichi; and Ichikawa Danjurō VII, who performed the role of Tamiya Iemon, the archetype of the “erotic evil character” (*iroaku*). When the bodies of Oiwa and Kohei are fished out of the river by Iemon 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 Iemon, 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 Iemon, 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 IEMON, a masterless samurai (rōnin) and a former retainer of Lord Enya

OIWA, Iemon’s wife

KOHEI, Iemon’s servant, loyal to Lord Enya



From the frontispiece of the gōkan edition of *Ghost Stories at Yotsuya*, called *Head Start on an Eastern Seaboard Journey: Ghost Stories at Yotsuya* (*Tōkaidōchū kadode no sakigake Yotsuya kaidan*, 1826), “written” by Onoe Baikō (Onoe Kikugorō III, 1784–1849), who performed in the first production in 1825, but in fact written by the playwright Hanagasa Bunkyo (1785–1860) 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 eerie images of gourds on the border echo Oiwa’s disfigured face. Text: “Autumn grasses also change in this way—a withered field” (*aki no chigusa / kō mo kawaru ka / kare nohara*). Ippitsuan.”

BANSUKE, Kanzō’s retainer

CHŌBEI, a rōnin, lemon’s crony

ITŌ KIHEI, 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

MAGOBEL, the father of Kohei

MOSUKE, a pawnbroker

OMAKI, a nurse in the Itō household

OUME, Oyumi's daughter and Kihei's granddaughter, wants to marry lemon

OYUMI, widowed daughter of Itō Kihei 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 dirty 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 Kohei, and Takuetsu, 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. Takuetsu 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 Kohei 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. Kohei 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.*)

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

IEMON: 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 Kohei stole. Look at this thing. (*Picks up a short, badly made sword*) This is all that Kohei 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 Kohei. 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 Kohei 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. Takuetsu, 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, reprimands Magobei (*left*) and Takuetsu (*center*) with his tobacco pipe. Oiwa, 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 Itō household, reaches into her robe to give the special medicine to Oiwa.

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

MAGOBEI: I don't quite know what to say. Kohei 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.<sup>2</sup>

LEMON: What?

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 Takuetsu*) Forgive me for having caused you so much trouble.

TAKUETSU: 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 Takuetsu*) Doctor, thank you for everything. Good-bye. (*Magobei departs down the runway, muttering as he goes. Takuetsu prepares medicine for Oiwa 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.*)

TAKUETSU (*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 Oshioda 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.

IEMON: 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.

IEMON: 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 idea! 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.

IEMON: Come on, help me.



Kohei (*left*) is restrained by Kanzō 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 Omaki.

KOHEI: 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):<sup>3</sup> What do we care?

KOHEI: 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 Kohei'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 Omaki, a wet nurse serving in the neighboring household of the rich Dr. Itō*

*Kihei. 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.)*

OMAKI: Is anyone home? May I come in?

ALL THREE: Who could that be?

LEMON: Someone's here. Stick Kohei in the closet.

ALL THREE: OK, OK. Get in there. *(They drag Kohei to the closet, slide the door open, throw him in, and close the door. Omaki 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. Lemon 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.

LEMON: 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 Omaki comes out and stops him.)*

OMAKI: 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. Lemon is surprised and wonders what he will have to do in exchange.)*

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

OMAKI: 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.

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

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

MOSUKE: I'll walk you to the street.

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

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

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

CHŌBEI: Well, lemon, 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.

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

CHŌBEI AND KANZŌ: What do you mean?

LEMON: Itō Kihei 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.

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 and looking sick and weak. A large mosquito net hangs from the ceiling, and a 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?

CHŌBEI AND KANZŌ: 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 Itō 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.

CHŌBEI: Look here, it's like I always say. What's past is past. Tamiya Iemon, 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.

CHŌBEI: 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 Kohei's sword*) He thinks that thing makes him look important. (*To Oiwa*) This medicine for your blood circulation came from the Itō mansion. You'd better take it. They 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: Iemon 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 Iemon promised to help me attack my father's murderer.<sup>4</sup> *(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 tortoise-shell 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 Kohei is tied up.)*

TAKUETSU (*enters from the back and, since Oiwa is hunched over, is totally 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 goes to comfort him, but then Oiwa cries out in pain, and he runs back to her. 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.*)

### *Itō Kihei's Mansion*

Lively folk music sounds as the stage revolves to reveal the grand and luxurious home of the rich doctor Itō Kihei. 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. Iemon is seated in the center with Chōbei and Kanzō to his right. Behind them sit Oyumi, Kihei's widowed daughter and Oume's mother, wearing a somber kimono befitting a widow; and Omaki, Oume's nurse. Chōbei and Kanzō enjoy the banquet while Bansuke performs a folk dance in the garden below. Kihei 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 Chōbei, Kanzō, and Bansuke.*

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

KIHEI: 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 Itō residence, Kanzō and Chōbei 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. Kihei (*far right*), the master of the house, stands behind lemon.

ALL THREE (KANZŌ, BANSUKE, AND CHŌBEI): Let us give you a hand.

Ha, ha, ha.

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

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.

CHŌBEI: 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.

KANZŌ 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.*)

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

LEMON: 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. Kihei puts the coins he has been washing on the lid of the box, which he slides over in front of lemon.*)

KIHEI: Please be kind enough to accept these, lemon.

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

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.

KIHEI: 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 love 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 scullery maid. I don't mind. Anything to let me stay by your side. (*Bows to Iemon*)

KIHEI: 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 Oiwa's 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?

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

KIHEI: So you deny my granddaughter's request?

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

OUME: 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.*)

KIHEI: 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, Oiwa'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.

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

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

IEMON: 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?

KIHEI: 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 Oiwa, 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.

KIHEI: 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.  
 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?  
 IEMON: I, I—  
 OYUMI: If you die, how can I protect this child all by myself?  
 IEMON: Well—  
 KIHEI: Then kill me!  
 IEMON: I, well . . .  
 KIHEI: I've done a monstrous thing.  
 OYUMI (*forcefully*): Please, give us your answer.  
 IEMON: 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?  
 IEMON: In exchange, I have a request myself.  
 KIHEI: And that is?  
 IEMON: Recommend me to Lord Moronao as a retainer.<sup>5</sup>  
 KIHEI: Done. I would have done that even if you hadn't asked, now that we all are one family.  
 IEMON: 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.<sup>6</sup>  
 OYUMI: As they say, the sooner, the better.  
 KIHEI: We'll have the wedding ceremony tonight. Do you agree?  
 IEMON: Certainly. (*To himself*) Hmm, maybe I can put the blame on that masseur who comes to see Oiwa.  
 KIHEI: What?  
 IEMON: 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.

IEMON: 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.*)

IEMON (*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.*)

IEMON: 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.*)

IEMON: 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.*)<sup>7</sup>

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.*<sup>8</sup> *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.*<sup>9</sup> *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.*)

society, thus capturing a dark side of late Tokugawa 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 Heizō. 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 Story of a Foreign Country* (*Tenjiku Tokubei Ikokubanashi*, 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* (*Sakurahime azuma no bunshō*, 1817)<sup>1</sup> and *Ghost Stories at Yotsuya* (*Yotsuya kaidan*, 1825).

### **GHOST STORIES AT YOTSUYA** (YOTSUYA KAIDAN, 1825)

In his *Eastern Seaboard Highway Yotsuya Ghost Stories* (*Tōkaidō 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 *Chūshingura: The Storehouse of Loyal Retainers* (*Kanadehon Chūshingura*, 1748). Accordingly, in *Chūshingura*, 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 *Chūshingura*, 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.



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 most popular kabuki actors of the time suggests an imaginary production. Light enters from two large windows (*ryōmado*) near the ceiling flanking the stage roof (*hafu*). The “full house” (*ōiri*) sign hangs next to the tricolor curtain (*upper left*). The square earthen-floor pit (*doma*) 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)

If *Chūshingura* 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 *Chūshingura*, 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 *Chūshingura*, 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 Yomoshichi; and Ichikawa Danjurō VII, who performed the role of Tamiya Iemon, the archetype of the “erotic evil character” (*iroaku*). When the bodies of Oiwa and Kohei are fished out of the river by Iemon 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 Iemon, 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 Iemon, 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 IEMON, a masterless samurai (rōnin) and a former retainer of Lord Enya

OIWA, Iemon’s wife

KOHEI, Iemon’s servant, loyal to Lord Enya



From the frontispiece of the gōkan edition of *Ghost Stories at Yotsuya*, called *Head Start on an Eastern Seaboard Journey: Ghost Stories at Yotsuya* (*Tōkaidōchū kadode no sakigake Yotsuya kaidan*, 1826), “written” by Onoe Baikō (Onoe Kikugorō III, 1784–1849), who performed in the first production in 1825, but in fact written by the playwright Hanagasa Bunkyō (1785–1860) 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 eerie images of gourds on the border echo Oiwa’s disfigured face. Text: “Autumn grasses also change in this way—a withered field” (*aki no chigusa / kō mo kawaru ka / kare nohara*). Ippitsuan.”

BANSUKE, Kanzō’s retainer

CHŌBEI, a rōnin, lemon’s crony

ITŌ KIHEI, 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

MAGOBEL, the father of Kohei

MOSUKE, a pawnbroker

OMAKI, a nurse in the Itō household

OUME, Oyumi's daughter and Kihei's granddaughter, wants to marry lemon

OYUMI, widowed daughter of Itō Kihei 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 dirty 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 Kohei, and Takuetsu, 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. Takuetsu 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 Kohei 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. Kohei 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.*)

MAGOBEI: Oh, no, no, you are quite right. There is nothing I could possibly say to defend what my son has done. You said that Kohei 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 Kohei stole. Look at this thing. (*Picks up a short, badly made sword*) This is all that Kohei 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 Kohei. 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 Kohei 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. Takuetsu, 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, reprimands Magobei (*left*) and Takuetsu (*center*) with his tobacco pipe. Oiwa, 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 Itō household, reaches into her robe to give the special medicine to Oiwa.

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

MAGOBEI: I don't quite know what to say. Kohei 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?

MAGOBEI (*to himself*): Hmm, now that his real master is so sick, maybe he thought this was his only hope.<sup>2</sup>

LEMON: What?

MAGOBEI: 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.

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

TAKUETSU: 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.

MAGOBEI: I understand. (*To Takuetsu*) Doctor, thank you for everything. Good-bye. (*Magobei departs down the runway, muttering as he goes. Takuetsu prepares medicine for Oiwa 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.*)

TAKUETSU (*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 Oshioda 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.

IEMON: 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.

IEMON: 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 idea! 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.

IEMON: Come on, help me.



Kohei (*left*) is restrained by Kanzō 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 Omaki.

KOHEI: 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):<sup>3</sup> What do we care?

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

LEMON: Shut up! Gag him!

ALL THREE: OK, OK. (*The three surround him, and Bansuke takes a handkerchief and ties it over Kohei'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 Omaki, a wet nurse serving in the neighboring household of the rich Dr. Itō*

*Kihei. 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.)*

OMAKI: Is anyone home? May I come in?

ALL THREE: Who could that be?

LEMON: Someone's here. Stick Kohei in the closet.

ALL THREE: OK, OK. Get in there. *(They drag Kohei to the closet, slide the door open, throw him in, and close the door. Omaki 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. Lemon 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.

LEMON: 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 Omaki comes out and stops him.)*

OMAKI: 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. Lemon is surprised and wonders what he will have to do in exchange.)*

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

OMAKI: 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.

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

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

MOSUKE: I'll walk you to the street.

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

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

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

CHŌBEI: Well, lemon, 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.

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

CHŌBEI AND KANZŌ: What do you mean?

LEMON: Itō Kihei 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.

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 and looking sick and weak. A large mosquito net hangs from the ceiling, and a 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?

CHŌBEI AND KANZŌ: 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 Itō 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.

CHŌBEI: Look here, it's like I always say. What's past is past. Tamiya Iemon, 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.

CHŌBEI: 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 Kohei's sword*) He thinks that thing makes him look important. (*To Oiwa*) This medicine for your blood circulation came from the Itō mansion. You'd better take it. They 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: Iemon 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 Iemon promised to help me attack my father's murderer.<sup>4</sup> *(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 tortoise-shell 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 Kohei is tied up.)*

TAKUETSU (*enters from the back and, since Oiwa is hunched over, is totally 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 goes to comfort him, but then Oiwa cries out in pain, and he runs back to her. 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.*)

### *Itō Kihei's Mansion*

Lively folk music sounds as the stage revolves to reveal the grand and luxurious home of the rich doctor Itō Kihei. 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. Iemon is seated in the center with Chōbei and Kanzō to his right. Behind them sit Oyumi, Kihei's widowed daughter and Oume's mother, wearing a somber kimono befitting a widow; and Omaki, Oume's nurse. Chōbei and Kanzō enjoy the banquet while Bansuke performs a folk dance in the garden below. Kihei 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 Chōbei, Kanzō, and Bansuke.*

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

KIHEI: 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 Itō residence, Kanzō and Chōbei 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. Kihei (*far right*), the master of the house, stands behind lemon.

ALL THREE (KANZŌ, BANSUKE, AND CHŌBEI): Let us give you a hand.

Ha, ha, ha.

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

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.

CHŌBEI: 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.

KANZŌ 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.*)

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

LEMON: 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. Kihei puts the coins he has been washing on the lid of the box, which he slides over in front of lemon.*)

KIHEI: Please be kind enough to accept these, lemon.

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

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.

KIHEI: 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 love 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 scullery maid. I don't mind. Anything to let me stay by your side. (*Bows to Iemon*)

KIHEI: 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 Oiwa's 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?

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

KIHEI: So you deny my granddaughter's request?

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

OUME: 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.*)

KIHEI: 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.

CHÔBEI: Hey, Iemon, you're making a big mistake. Look, Oiwa'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.

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

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

IEMON: 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?

KIHEI: 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 Oiwa, 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.

KIHEI: 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.  
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.<sup>5</sup>  
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.<sup>6</sup>  
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.*)