

VOLUME

3

Kabuki Plays On Stage  
DARKNESS AND DESIRE, 1804-1864

EDITED BY JAMES R. BRANDON AND SAMUEL L. LEITER

"The Ghost Stories at Utsuya on the Tōkaidō"

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Two-panel woodblock print by Utagawa Kunisada I (later Utagawa Toyokuni III, 1786–1864), Ichimura-za, eighth month 1831. The right panel shows Oiwa's "ghost emerging from the lantern, Onoe Kikugorō [III], famous in the Three Cities." The inscription on the lantern reads: "A full house achieved for this autumn play: Oiwa, a stunning success." Oiwa's gangster husband, here called "Kamiya Niemon" ("Seki Sanjurō" II), stands, horrified, within a snow-covered bamboo grove as Oiwa's spirit materializes from the blazing lantern. (Tsubouchi Memorial Theatre Museum of Waseda University)

The Ghost Stories  
at Yotsuya on the Tōkaidō  
*Tōkaidō Yotsuya Kaidan*

Tsuruya Nanboku IV

TRANSLATED BY PAUL B. KENNELLY



ONBŌ CANAL

*Juman Tsubo Onbōbori no Ba*

THE DREAM

*Yume no Ba*

SNAKE MOUNTAIN HERMITAGE

*Hebiyama Anjitsu no Ba*

1825 NAKAMURA-ZA, EDO

# The Ghost Stories at Yotsuya on the Tōkaidō

## INTRODUCTION

Tsuruya Nanboku IV's (1755–1829) *The Ghost Stories at Yotsuya on the Tōkaidō* was first produced at the Nakamura-za in Edo in the seventh lunar month of 1825 as a five-act summer play (*natsu kyōgen*). An extraordinary production strategy was used whereby Acts III and V were presented on alternate days with 1748's classic revenge drama *The Treasury of Loyal Retainers* (Kanadehon Chūshingura), allowing audiences to contrast worlds of dark and light: the newer play's representations of ghosts and grim lower-class life were set against the aristocratic heroics of Japan's outstanding vendetta play. *Loyal Retainers* was performed with costumes and sets in period (*jidai-mono*) style, and *Ghost Stories at Yotsuya* was performed with those suited to the gritty raw-life (*kizewamono*) style of the Bunsei period (1818–1830). If *Loyal Retainers* epitomized feudal loyalty, *Ghost Stories at Yotsuya* treated this ethic as irrelevant, if not abhorrent. *Ghost Stories at Yotsuya* starred Ichikawa Danjūrō VII (1791–1859) and Onoe Kikugorō III (1784–1849), the former as Iemon, an archvillain (*katakiyaku*) in the newly developing subcategory of sexually appealing rogue (*iroaku*), the latter in three roles: Oiwa, Iemon's wife, who becomes a vengeful ghost; Kohei, Iemon's servant, who becomes a ghost loyal to a feudal vendetta; and Oiwa's human avenger, Yomoshichi. Nanboku is renowned for writing plays in both the ghost play (*kaidan mono*) and the raw-life genres. *Ghost Stories at Yotsuya* is a masterful combination of those genres, a play providing spectacular moments of supernatural horror as well as depicting grinding poverty.

Nanboku drew on numerous and varied sources for *Ghost Stories at Yotsuya*, including contemporary novels (*gōkan*) (one actually written by Nanboku himself some twenty years earlier), historical records of an incident involving a mistreated wife and her jealous act of vengeance, the extremely popular (and frequently dramatized) tale of the Soga brothers' revenge against their father's murderer, and Nanboku's own plays.

Translated here are Acts III and V, the "Onbō Canal" "The Dream," and "Snake Mountain Hermitage" scenes. Act IV has no plot relevance to either act. Act I (trans. Oshima 1998) establishes the evil characters of Naosuke and Iemon, in particular Iemon's treachery toward his master, Enya Hangan—from the *Loyal Retainers*' world—and Iemon's murder of Oiwa's father. This sets in motion the play's main theme: Oiwa's vendetta against Iemon, which parodies the feudal

revenge against the evil Kô no Moronao carried out by the forty-seven masterless samurai in *Loyal Retainers*. Act II embellishes Iemon's callousness. He is disgusted by Oiwa's unkempt appearance following childbirth and is impatient to rapidly restore his rank and stipend. With Iemon's consent, a neighbor poisons Oiwa, which results in horrible facial disfigurement. Iemon seizes all of Oiwa's belongings to pawn in exchange for some fine clothes to wear at his wedding to the neighbor's daughter. When Oiwa learns of the wedding, she prepares to confront Iemon at the neighbor's mansion. Overcome with jealousy and rage, her hair falls out as she combs it (*kamisuki*), magnifying her ugliness. She dies accidentally—and grotesquely—before she can make the trip. Iemon blames her death on Kohei, his servant, and murders him. Then he orders his cronies to dispose of the two corpses by nailing them to either side of a raindoor (*toita*) and tossing it into Onbô Canal.

The first scene in this translation, "Onbô Canal," was probably performed at the close of day one of the original two-day performance and repeated as the first item on day two. The repetition would have served two purposes. First, it would have showcased the skill of Kikugorô, the star, in playing both male and female ghosts by means of quick changes (*hayagawari*). In one of kabuki's most famous stage tricks, the raindoor switch (*toitagaeshi*), a single actor plays the part of both Oiwa's and Kohei's corpses, which are nailed to either side of the raindoor. Both come briefly to life before turning into skeletons. The scene concludes with an elaborate nighttime mime scene (*danmari*) in which Iemon, Naosuke, and Yomoshichi struggle for a letter that is vital to the feudal vendetta in *Loyal Retainers*. The second purpose of the repetition relates to physical performance conditions. Theatres were lit by daylight through overhead windows and by candles when the windows were closed for scenes of darkness; audiences were thus accustomed to dim lighting. The performances at either end of the day would have occurred in intense gloom, emphasizing the shock value of the raindoor effect.

The next scene in the translation, "The Dream," is the first scene of Act V, an act that strongly resembles a *nô* play in structure. In the first half of a *nô* play a character encounters a ghost without realizing its true nature; in the second half, the ghost reveals itself and discloses an attachment to the living world. The revelation enables the ghost to break that attachment and find peace. "The Dream" scene occurs at the time of the Tanabata Festival (Festival for Separated Lovers) and the Bon Festival (Festival for the Pacification of the Dead), both held in mid-summer. Iemon dreams of a future when he has been promoted to samurai status and of a past where he has met a young, beautiful woman who closely resembles

Oiwa. In fact, autumn flowers adorn Oiwa's cottage, and, at the present time, the young woman is a ghost. These seasonal and time discrepancies are typical of *nô* plays. The dream culminates with a highly erotic love scene (*nureba*) and the ghost's transformation into a monster.

The final scene in the translation, "Snake Mountain Hermitage," is the second scene of Act V. In it the immense beauty of the summer cottage is replaced by the ominous gloom of Snake Mountain Hermitage in winter. The contrast of light and dark settings and of dramatic moods is typical of Nanboku's writing. Iemon clings to a single hope: he intends to renounce his loyalty to Hangan to gain admission into Moronao's service. In a series of heart-stopping special effects, the ghost of Oiwa confounds Iemon's plan. The lantern-escape (*chôchin nuke*) episode in which Oiwa's ghost directly confronts Iemon was introduced in an 1831 production starring Kikugorô III. The episode has remained popular ever since and is included here. A series of murder scenes (*koroshiba*) follow, terrifying in their graphic cruelty but magnificent for their stylized, dreamlike quality. Particularly innovative is the Buddhist altar change (*butsudangaeshi*) episode in which the ghost of Oiwa, played by an actor attached to a wheel built into the scenery, appears and disappears from behind a Buddhist altar. The play ends with the demise of Iemon during a highly stylized combat scene (*tachimawari*).

An annotated text is available in Gunji Masakatsu, ed., *Tôkaidô Yotsuya Kaidan: Shinchô Nihon Koten Shûsei*, Vol. 45. Videotapes used were of the Kokuritsu Gekijô (National Theatre of Japan) productions of 1971 and 1982 and of the 1983 Kabuki-za production.

#### CHARACTERS

- OIWA, *wife of TAMIYA IEMON*  
 TAMIYA IEMON, *a handsome rônin, husband of OIWA*  
 OYUMI, *widow of ITÔ and grandmother of OUME*  
 OMAKI, *servant of OYUMI*  
 OKUMA, *mother of IEMON*  
 NAOSUKE GONBEI, *common-law husband of OSODE*  
 AKIYAMA CHÔBEI, *servant of IEMON*  
 KOBOTOKE KOHEI, *servant of IEMON*  
 SATÔ YOMOSHICHI, *a rônin, brother-in-law of OIWA*  
 OMON, *servant girl*  
 SHINDÔ GENSHIRÔ, *former husband of OKUMA*  
 JÔNEN, *master of Snake Mountain Hermitage*

FOLLOWERS of JÛNEN

KOBAYASHI HEINAI, *a samurai in the household of KÔ NO MORONAO*

FOOTMEN of KOBAYASHI HEINAI

SEKIGUCHI KANZÔ, *a rônin, former crony of TAMIYA IEMON*

BANSUKE, *servant of SEKIGUCHI KANZÔ*

STAGE ASSISTANTS, *black-garbed kurogo*

**Onbô Canal**

*(To accelerating ki clacks the curtain is slowly pushed open. The setting is a desolate, intensely gloomy graveyard by the side of the Onbô Canal, which flows beneath a high embankment—or dike—backed by a thick hedge of grass. At extreme right the hanamichi connects with an earthen ramp that ascends from the canal to a cluster of bushes atop the embankment. An upturned bucket sits on a small landing that adjoins the ramp. A sluice gate, the height of the embankment, is on the other side. At left, on top of the embankment, the branches of a massive pine tree dangle like fishing lines over wooden grave tablets and an upright barrel. Also at left, a flight of steps descends from the embankment to a large landing where two poverty-stricken women, OYUMI and her faithful servant OMAKI, sit. The fine quality of their dirty costumes hints at former occupations as mistress and servant in a large, prosperous household. OYUMI, her body crumpled and hair bedraggled, seems utterly crushed by woe, except for a single obsession. OMAKI massages her mistress' back and encourages her. At extreme left is a cooking pot suspended from a wooden tripod. Offstage, languid shamisen music completes the somber scene.)*

OMAKI: How are you feeling today, Oyumi?

OYUMI: Don't worry like that! I feel much better. *(Burning with a grudge.)* I just want to find Tamiya Iemon, who murdered my husband, Lord Itô, and my granddaughter, Oume!

*(She weeps, and OMAKI retreats a short distance out of respect.)*

OMAKI: Now, now! I understand perfectly. You are all I have left in the world.

OYUMI *(Softening)*: Yes, you have cared for me all through this trial. *(She draws a red brocade amulet from her bosom and holds it tenderly in front of her. She recalls the wedding night of OUME in horror.)* This amulet failed to protect Oume. Iemon displayed no fear of it at all. *(Overcome by grief, she lets her hands collapse into her lap.)*

OMAKI: Don't talk like that. *(She picks up a small bag of rice.)* I'll make dinner while you pray for Oume's repose.

*(Offstage drum plays water pattern [mizu no oto] as OMAKI turns her back to OYUMI, draws water from the river, and washes the rice. OYUMI wipes her eyes with a hand towel [tenugui] and starts to chant prayers, but, overcome with grief,*

she slumps forward holding the amulet. A black-garbed **STAGE ASSISTANT** [kurogo] manipulates a pole [sashigane] to which a realistic rat prop is attached. The rat, which embodies the ghost of **OIWA**, pokes its nose out from the edge of the canal and waits for an opportunity to seize the amulet. It then grabs the amulet between its teeth. Dorodoro drum pattern as **OYUMI** and **OMAKI** recoil with a mixture of astonishment and terror. **OYUMI** flaps her towel at the rat. **OMAKI** waves her hands as the rat scuttles around and around the landing. **OMAKI** loses her footing and plunges into the canal. Triple tsuke beats. Dorodoro. **OYUMI** screams and reaches after **OMAKI**. Finally, **OYUMI** collapses sideways in a heap, her back to the audience. Double tsuke beats. **NAOSUKE GONBEI** appears on the hanamichi to offstage drums and flute [narimono] accompaniment. He has the air of a vagabond, eager to seize any opportunity that might come his way. He carries a bucket and long pole with a curved hook at one end and wears close-fitting pants that extend just below the knees in the manner of an eel fisherman.)

**NAOSUKE** (*At shichisan*): Not a single measly fish for all my work! (*He stares into the canal.*) This spot looks promising, with all the water being thrashed about! (*Offstage shamisen music continues as NAOSUKE proceeds to the main stage. He walks partly up the ramp to the embankment and stops for a moment, crouching as if he has spied something in the canal. He puts down his bucket and lowers himself gingerly into the water, pole with curved hook at the ready. He dips the hook into the water three times. Dorodoro and tsuke beats accompany each attempt. The first two times turn up nothing but weeds. The third time, however, he feels an object on the hook. A clump of hair attached to it comes into sight. NAOSUKE tears the hair from the hook and spots the magnificent tortoiseshell comb handed down to OIWA by her mother. Triple tsuke beats. He holds the comb at arm's length and intently assesses its value. He ad-libs [sutezerifu] concerning the price it might fetch. He climbs back onto the landing at right center while a lively shamisen accompaniment announces the simultaneous entry on the embankment of the grey-haired old lady, OKUMA, at right, and the stylishly dressed TAMIYA IEMON from left. OKUMA carries a long, narrow wooden grave tablet held upright. IEMON wears the two swords of a samurai and a basket hat over his head as a disguise. He carries a long pole in his left hand and a box for fish bait in his right. Mother and son proceed at an identical pace toward the center. They counter-cross. IEMON places his right hand on the pole to defend himself. Tsuke beat. He recognizes OKUMA and relaxes. He invites her to sit on the barrel, and he sits on the ground slightly to her right.*)

**IEMON** (*Obviously relieved and delighted*): Hello, it's you, Ma! I sure am glad to see you!

**OKUMA**: Me too! I've come up with an idea to stop the manhunt for you. Do you remember that I worked as a cook in Moronao's household at the same time you were in Hangan's service? When I retired, Moronao gave me this letter in case I ever needed help. (*She produces a small cloth package from her bosom,*



unwraps the package, unfolds the letter it contains, and passes it to IEMON. *He inspects the letter, refolds it, and places it inside his kimono.*) As soon as I heard that you had lost your position with Hangan's clan, I sent a message to Moronao to remind him of the letter. Later, I heard rumors that you'd been implicated in the deaths of Oiwa, Oume, and Lord Itō. So, I decided to come up with a deception. *(She holds out the wooden grave tablet.)* We'll spread our own rumor that you're dead by erecting this grave tablet! Aren't I the clever one?

IEMON *(With relish)*: So that's what you're up to! A terrific plan! I've an idea as well. I'll shift the blame for the killings to my friend, Kanzō, and his servant, Bansuke. But let's try your plan first! Set the tablet up here!

OKUMA: Okay! This spot looks good! *(They both rise. OKUMA sets up the tablet slightly to her left. Then mother and son stand back to admire their handiwork. They pose to double tsuke beats.)* Well, I'll be off! Come visit any time!

IEMON: Good-bye, Ma! I'll be sure to visit!

*(Offstage narimono accompanies OKUMA lifting the left hem of her kimono and exiting left. Meanwhile, NAOSUKE, below and to their right, has listened attentively. IEMON sits down at center and, with his right hand, casts his fishing line into the water. Dorodoro. Holding another line in his left hand, he braces the fishing pole against the strong current while he sets the pole firmly in the embankment. He sits on a barrel and takes a pipe and tobacco pouch from his left sleeve, halting when he realizes that he has no light. IEMON catches sight of NAOSUKE out of the corner of his eye. He rises and approaches NAOSUKE, not yet recognizing him.)*

IEMON: Got a light?

NAOSUKE: Sure. *(He stands up, places his left foot on the upturned bucket, and leans upstage with the light. Tsuke beat. IEMON bends down to accept it.)* Well! Iemon! It's good to see you!  
*(IEMON starts backward and is on guard immediately.)*

IEMON: Oh! Is that you, Naosuke?

*(NAOSUKE casually puts away the light, collects his bucket and pole, and ascends the few remaining steps to the embankment. He talks as he strides purposefully toward IEMON, now seated on the barrel at left center. NAOSUKE stops just beyond IEMON's reach and puts down the bucket and pole. He crouches and then addresses IEMON in a challenging tone.)*

NAOSUKE: Naosuke? I'm "Gonbei the eel-catcher"! *(Menacingly, he states a common pseudonym for a gangster.)* You're the sworn enemy of Oiwa, my wife's sister!

IEMON *(Uneasily)*: You're joking! What do you mean?

NAOSUKE *(Crouching)*: Come on! You can't have forgotten! Oiwa's younger sister is Osode, my wife! *(Ironically.)* I could say, "On guard, Iemon!" but there's no need to fight. Instead, hand over that letter and I'll claim your position in Moronao's household. No one will know the difference!

IEMON (*Protesting*): This letter contains the seeds for my future!

NAOSUKE (*Taking up the words of a popular ditty*): "If you plant those seeds yourself, I'll dig them up right away" and turn you in to the cops!

IEMON (*Gratingly*): All right! There's no way out!

(*Dorodoro. IEMON's fishing line begins to quiver violently. Both NAOSUKE and IEMON rise excitedly. IEMON bends down, picks up the pole, and heaves in his catch. NAOSUKE animatedly runs behind IEMON, uproots the tablet set up by OKUMA, and knocks the fish on the head. Tsuke beat. NAOSUKE thrusts the tablet away to the left and it plummets to the large landing below, where it strikes OYUMI. Tsuke beat. The shock revives OYUMI, who clutches her heart, props up the tablet, and stares at it in disbelief. The voice of OYUMI captures the attention of NAOSUKE and then IEMON. They lean toward her and listen carefully.*)

OYUMI (*Stunned*): Well! The name "Tamiya Iemon" is inscribed on this tablet! (*Her revenge reignites.*) Has he finally received his just reward?

(*OYUMI turns around, looks up, and spots NAOSUKE and IEMON. IEMON averts his face to avoid recognition. He pulls NAOSUKE's sleeve and whispers to him to say, "He's dead." NAOSUKE nods his understanding.*)

OYUMI: Excuse me, sir! May I ask you a question?

NAOSUKE: Oh! What?

OYUMI (*Feigning nonchalance*): This tablet has the name "Tamiya Iemon" inscribed on it. Do you know how he died?

NAOSUKE (*Relishing IEMON's discomfort*): What! Tamiya Iemon? He's here! (*IEMON tugs at NAOSUKE's sleeve and again urges him to say, "He's dead."*) Just kidding! He's certainly dead! No doubt about it! A close relative erected that tablet after Iemon's death. No one would go to all that trouble if he were still alive! Would they? It's true! He's dead!

OYUMI (*With lingering doubts*): When did he die?

NAOSUKE (*Perplexed*): What do you mean? Certainly, today . . . (*almost at once he realizes his error and changes tack*) today is the forty-ninth day after his death and, thus, the end of the mourning period.

OYUMI (*Taken aback*): Eh? Is it the forty-ninth day? Oh! Oh! Oh!

(*OYUMI thinks of OUME and weeps piteously, head buried in her hand towel. IEMON rises and circles behind NAOSUKE to creep up on OYUMI.*)

NAOSUKE (*Watching IEMON*): There, there! (*Distracting OYUMI.*) Are you a sister of Iemon? Ah! That's it!

(*OYUMI lifts her head, by which time IEMON has descended the steps to the landing and is already behind her.*)

OYUMI: No, no! Iemon is my enemy. He murdered my husband and my only granddaughter! Since then my heart has burned with revenge! At last, my prayers are answered!

(IEMON kicks OYUMI into the canal, where she disappears without trace. Loud tsuke beats accent the kick and the splash. A large temple bell tolls. Dorodoro. IEMON faces front, pushes his basket hat from his head until it hangs from his right shoulder, places his right foot on a short post at the edge of the landing, and, with his left foot well behind, strikes a mie. The bell tolls again together with a single loud tsuke beat.)

NAOSUKE: Truly . . .

IEMON: Your actions . . .

NAOSUKE: Are incredible!

(The bell tolls continuously as drums swell in volume. NAOSUKE collects his pole and bucket, rapid shamisen music plays, and he briskly marches off left. He completely forgets to collect the letter from IEMON.)

IEMON (Sneering at OYUMI): That bitch popped up in one too many places for her own good! (He ascends the steps, bends over to pull in his fishing line, and rises quickly in surprise.) Damn! The bait's disappeared! (He replaces the bait and sits down at center. Drum plays water pattern [mizu no oto] with a shamisen accompaniment as AKIYAMA CHÔBEI enters right, on the embankment, with a confident spring in his step. He wears the single sword of a townsman and a pale hand towel covers his bedraggled hair. He removes the towel and folds it before he stops at the sluice gate.)

CHÔBEI (Pretending surprise): Ah, Tamiya! I didn't expect to run into you!

IEMON (Startled): What? You!

(CHÔBEI addresses IEMON in a menacing tone. Throughout the following episode the standing CHÔBEI harangues the seated IEMON with contemptuous hand gestures. Clearly he holds the whip hand and is determined that IEMON know it.)

CHÔBEI: Well, well! You've killed Oiwa and Kohei and, on top of that, Itô and his granddaughter, too! Since you disappeared the police have been hunting Kanzô, Bansuke, and myself for the murders. Of course, we'll turn you in straightaway if we're caught!

IEMON (Cowed): Look here! Haven't we worked hand in hand until now? Surely we can make a deal?

CHÔBEI (Triumphantly): Now you're talking! We'll all disappear if you come up with enough hard cash!

(The dialogue grows increasingly rapid.)

IEMON: All right, but where can I find the money?

CHÔBEI (Not taken in for a moment): Then I'm off to the police now!

IEMON (Beaten): Wait!

CHÔBEI: The cash or the police?

IEMON (To himself): Mmm. What will I do for the money?

CHÔBEI: Well?

IEMON: Well . . .

CHÔBEI: Well . . .

BOTH: Well, well, well, well . . . well!

*(The repeated "wells" rise to a climax [kuriage].)*

CHÔBEI: Well, where's the cash coming from?

*(IEMON ponders and then fishes the letter out of his kimono.)*

IEMON *(Conspiratorially)*: Look! This letter bears the personal seal and guarantee of my fortune by Lord Moronao. Take it!

*(IEMON proffers the letter to CHÔBEI, who reads it with great deliberation.)*

*(IEMON rises and stands a respectful distance from CHÔBEI.)*

CHÔBEI: I see. You'll give us the cash in return for this letter.

IEMON: That's right.

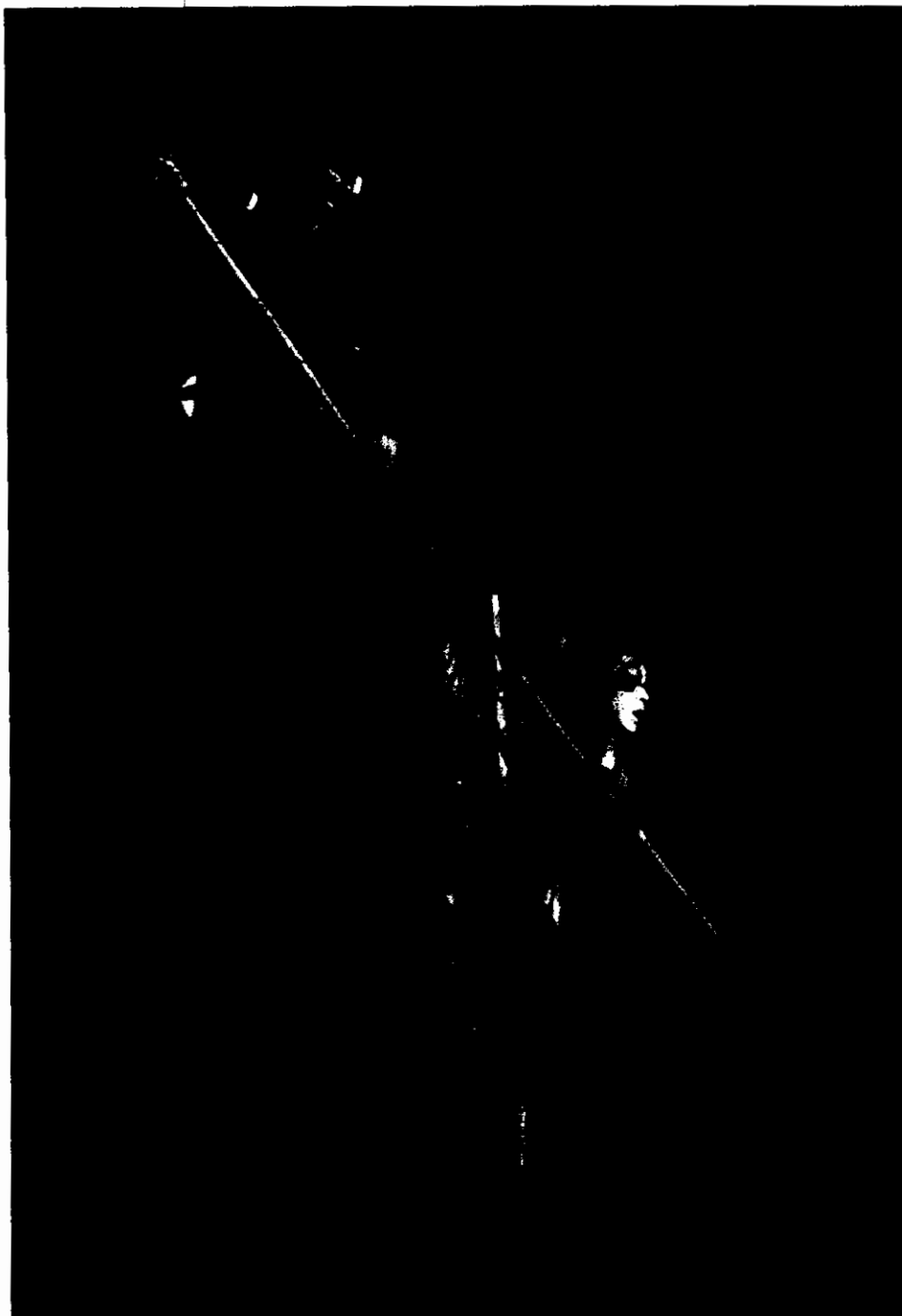
CHÔBEI: We have a deal, Tamiya, sir.

IEMON: That's agreed, Akiyama, sir.

CHÔBEI: Good-bye!

*(To offstage shamisen and the tolling of the bell, a smug CHÔBEI puts the letter in his kimono, walks behind IEMON, and exits left. IEMON watches him depart, his left arm outstretched in despair. IEMON collects his fishing pole, basket hat, bait box, and tobacco pouch. To languid shamisen and light dorodoro he crosses from the earthen ramp to the hanamichi. Drumbeats accelerate. IEMON reaches shichisan as offstage flute and large drum play wind pattern [kaze no oto]. He halts and nervously looks around in all directions. A raindoor bearing the corpses of OIWA and KOBOTOKE KOHEI on opposite sides floats into view from stage left. IEMON is irresistibly drawn back to the embankment, where a STAGE ASSISTANT relieves him of his belongings, except for the fishing pole. IEMON peers down into the canal, spots the raindoor, and grimaces in horror. He recovers his nerve in an instant and strides quickly to the barrel. He faces front and, using the fishing pole, steers the raindoor to the bank, where it disappears. After a few moments, it reappears in a vertical position, immediately below IEMON. Fast and loud dorodoro as IEMON reaches with the pole and draws the raindoor halfway up the embankment. The lights dim, dorodoro softens, and eerie flute swells. IEMON places the pole on the ground to his right. He raises the cloth covering the raindoor and takes in the horrible sight. Thundering dorodoro. He throws the cloth into the canal, revealing the corpse of OIWA dressed only in a somber, flimsy kimono. Her arms hang down limply. Her hairline is set well back from the eyebrows and her hair dangles loosely to below the shoulders. The forehead and skin around the right eye are horribly disfigured as a result of the poison IEMON consented to give her. She begins to move her head and right arm listlessly.)*

IEMON: Oiwa, Oiwa! Forgive me! I'm sorry!



Standing on the embankment of Onbō Canal, Iemon (Kataoka Takao, later Kataoka Nizaemon XV) pulls from the water the disfigured corpse of his wife, Oiwa (Bandō Tamasaburō V), which he had previously fastened to the raindoor. (Umemura Yūta, Engeki Shuppansha)

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(OIWA straightens her left arm above her waist, with the extended hand clutching OUME's amulet.)

OIWA (*Weakly but eerily*): Let the leaves of the Tamiya and Itô family branches wither to exorcise my vengeance!

IEMON (*Still crouching directly over her*): Oh, Buddha! Save me! Save me! Save me!

(*The left arm gradually falls back to its side in apparent submission. Then the corpse collapses back onto the raiendoor.*) Ha! So you're not ready to make your peace yet!

(IEMON turns the raiendoor over to hide the corpse, but this action reveals another somberly clothed figure attached to the reverse side of the door. A crown of waterweeds covers the head and shoulders.)

IEMON: My God! On the other side, too!

(IEMON grasps the waterweeds and holds them. The dramatic tension rises as deafening dorodoro accelerates. IEMON whips away the weeds and reveals KOHEI's corpse. A wide bald strip runs through the center of his hair, and one side of his scalp bears a bloody wound. The same actor, concealed in a compartment in the embankment, plays both OIWA and KOHEI. He pokes his head through a hole to provide OIWA's head and, after a quick makeup change, KOHEI's head. He also thrusts his arms through separate holes.)

KOHEI (*With a piercing stare*): My master has an incurable disease. Give me your family medicine!

IEMON: Is this the work of a ghost, too?

(IEMON abruptly retreats, then recovers his nerve and replaces the weeds covering KOHEI's head. When, after some moments, he releases his grip, the mask drops, and the cloth covering the corpse falls to reveal a skeleton. Its head moves as if trying to speak. In terror, IEMON bolts upright and the skeleton collapses into the canal. Booming dorodoro. IEMON raises both hands to fend off the ghosts. As a last resort, he kneels, head bowed and hands clasped in prayer. The ringing of a metal bell is heard. On its final ring the lights come up, revealing SATÔ YOMOSHICHI posing down right, below the embankment. On the embankment IEMON is at center and NAOSUKE at left, dressed in a light summer kimono [yukata] hitched up to reveal his legs and cradling a fishing pole in his left arm. They begin a mime struggle as if in the darkness [danmari] for a letter in YOMOSHICHI's obi containing details of the vendetta against KÔ NO MORONAO. Shamisen music plays. YOMOSHICHI and IEMON reach for their swords and pose in a mie to double tsuke beats. NAOSUKE, holding his pole vertically, attacks IEMON. They pose in a mie to double tsuke beats. IEMON fingers his sword hilt, forcing NAOSUKE to retreat several steps twirling his pole. NAOSUKE creeps past IEMON, brushing his left shoulder. IEMON swats him with an upraised left arm, and NAOSUKE retreats left. YOMOSHICHI mounts the steps to the earthen ramp and counter-crosses with IEMON, brushing his arm. Double tsuke beats. All three

strike a mie. YOMOSHICHI, facing rear, and IEMON, facing front, grope toward each other. Drums. NAOSUKE slashes with his pole as IEMON moves toward the barrel. IEMON grasps the pole and raises his other hand high, then, in a single sinuous movement, drops it behind his back. YOMOSHICHI raises his left leg and poses with both hands resting on his hips. Fast tsuke beats fade and loud drums beat briefly. A single tsuke beat. The bell tolls. IEMON casts off NAOSUKE's pole. YOMOSHICHI straightens, gropes, steps away from IEMON, and then counter-crosses, stopping by IEMON's side. NAOSUKE retreats left. Offstage musicians sing as OMON, carrying an umbrella that obscures her upper body, enters left and stops. NAOSUKE darts past OMON, stopping by her side. Both pairs converge. Tsuke beat. YOMOSHICHI approaches OMON, touches her umbrella, momentarily starts backward, and then moves boldly past her, grasping NAOSUKE's horizontal pole. He casts away the pole and grips IEMON's left sleeve. OMON brushes IEMON and retreats left, passing YOMOSHICHI. NAOSUKE takes OMON's left sleeve, and they all dance a single step right. OMON takes YOMOSHICHI's left sleeve, forming an unbroken line, and all dance two steps left. Breaking the line, OMON releases YOMOSHICHI's sleeve, and all dance two steps right before rejoining. The men strike a powerful mie with legs far apart. IEMON brings his right hand to his chest; YOMOSHICHI raises his left arm above his head; NAOSUKE holds his pole vertically under his left shoulder. Double tsuke beats. OMON counter-crosses with YOMOSHICHI and meets IEMON behind the umbrella. Double tsuke beats. OMON, the umbrella still hiding her face, runs to shichisan and kneels. Unbeknownst to YOMOSHICHI, NAOSUKE snatches the letter but drops it. He raises his pole horizontally, and the three men seize it. As they struggle, the pole moves rhythmically left, right, and again left. Releasing his grip, IEMON cuts the pole. Double tsuke beats. YOMOSHICHI retains one-quarter of the pole and charges right while NAOSUKE, moving left, keeps the remainder. Double tsuke beats. NAOSUKE cowers left. YOMOSHICHI poses martially; IEMON stands center, head high, slowly swinging his sword out to his right. The men strike a final powerful group mie. Very loud, repeated tsuke beats as YOMOSHICHI extends his left leg wide, IEMON shoulders the sword, and NAOSUKE studies the letter held high in his left hand. The curtain closes, leaving OMON alone on the hanamichi, revealing that she is OIWA, played by a stand-in actor. She adjusts her appearance to that of a lovely young lady and, fanning herself all the while, exits along the hanamichi to the clacking of the ki.)

#### The Dream

(The curtain is pushed open to accelerating ki clacks that gradually fade. A single loud ki clack. Eleven FOLLOWERS of JÔNEN, the master of Snake Mountain Hermitage, are seated in a row across the stage and facing the audience. To the accompaniment of loud dorodoro, a small banner is raised at extreme stage left

bearing a large Chinese character meaning "spirit" [kokoro], signifying the path to Buddhist paradise. Dorodoro fades and then swells as the curtain is pulled aside to reveal a summer cottage at left, raised on a low platform. Strips of gaily colored paper on which poems are written for the summer Tanabata Festival drift in the air from bamboo poles on either side of a fine bamboo screen, which conceals the cottage veranda. Squash vines coil down from the roof to the eaves against an elegant background of plum and cherry trees. Vines also cling to a wicket of chestnut wood at center, adjacent to the cottage, while bush clover grows in profusion beneath the portal, providing the autumn semblance of a peasant's cottage. At right is a lattice fence leaning under the burden of squash. Thunderous dorodoro announces the presence of OIWA's ghost. Then silence. A solo offstage singer accompanied by a shamisen begins singing a plaintive song [dokugin], which accentuates the eerie silence. A flute plays as a hawk flies into the cottage. A single loud ki clack. An imperious IEMON appears on the hanamichi dressed ceremoniously in a dark formal haori and the light-patterned hakama of a samurai. A pale blue silk braid in the style of fireflies beating their wings adorns his topknot, and he wears garden sandals. A hawk's tether dangles from one hand while a resplendent Bon Festival lantern hangs from the other. Behind IEMON strolls CHÔBEI, now dressed in a dandified manner and leading a dog played by an actor in a dog costume [nuigurumi]. CHÔBEI, with pomaded hair, wears a white satin kimono and purple socks. The bamboo screen rises, disclosing OIWA. She wears a brightly colored light silk kimono with long, flowing sleeves and a black satin obi. The apron and towel, which cover her hair, complete the image of a beautiful country maiden. OIWA sits at a spinning wheel, weaving multicolored thread, with a pretty, paper-enclosed lamp by her side. Her appearance is consistent with the legend that held that a woman could improve her needlework on the day of the Tanabata Festival. IEMON's hawk is perched atop the lamp. IEMON, standing at shichisan, and OIWA, in the cottage, catch sight of each other and strike a Tanabata mie, leaning toward each other like lovers yearning to reunite, to plaintive shamisen music and triple tsuke beats. The moment is symbolic, not literal, as IEMON is outside and OIWA inside, thus making it impossible to actually see each other. As the moon floats free from its veil of clouds, both characters utter passionate ad-libs [sutezerifu] appropriate to long-separated lovers. Then the music ceases. A sharp ki clack: fireflies manipulated with long poles by several STAGE ASSISTANTS swarm onto the stage, bringing the tableau to life.)

IEMON: The late evening shoals and white-capped waves of the Milky Way . . .

OIWA: Are spanned by a magpie bridge of reproach. (*Reverting to normal prose.*)

Although this hawk is not a magpie, it has wandered in here to rest.

IEMON: I wondered where Kogasumi, my prize hawk, had disappeared to, so I went searching and hoped to stumble upon a beauty!



CHŌBEI: Truly, this evening is the Tanabata Festival! With a name that means "love-struck," it's no wonder that Kogasumi went astray on the very day that lover-stars meet! (*He parodies IEMON's yearning.*) Has he flown off to the Milky Way?

IEMON: Twaddle! My truant hawk is sure to be in the neighborhood. Come on! Search for him! Search for him!

(*The offstage solo song resumes as IEMON and CHŌBEI approach the door of the cottage. CHŌBEI peeps inside, sees OIWA, and is astounded.*)

CHŌBEI: Master! Master! Look at that beauty spinning thread!

IEMON: What! A beauty?

CHŌBEI: Yes!

IEMON: Where? Where? (*Curiosity compels him to peek inside the cottage.*) I see! A rare country maid! Ask her about my hawk.

CHŌBEI: Yes sir! (*He enters.*) Hey, girl! My master's hunting hawk has disappeared. Has it popped in here?

OIWA: Yes. This hawk just flew in and perched itself next to me.

CHŌBEI: Terrific! I'll call my master. (*He returns to IEMON to tell him the good news.*) The hawk's here!

IEMON: Is that so? I'll go and collect it. Come with me!

(*IEMON enters and is instantly smitten by OIWA's loveliness. To a sharp triple tsuke beat he strikes a mie, legs far apart, eyes bulging, and head thrust forward. IEMON sits down cross-legged upstage, and OIWA, as the dutiful hostess, moves close. CHŌBEI sits behind his highly excited master.*)

IEMON: Well, well! You do have a stylish home! My hunting hawk strayed in this vicinity, and when I learned it was here, I came to retrieve it.

OIWA: How ceremonious you are! By all means, take your hawk.

IEMON: Too kind! I'd like to take it now, but (*striving for an excuse to remain*), well, a return journey on foot this evening would certainly be more trouble than it's worth due to the darkness.

CHŌBEI (*Cantankerously*): What's that, Master? How can it be dark, Master? This evening is the Tanabata Festival. The moon is risen and it's just like day! Besides, you brought this lantern on purpose for the homeward journey. The darkness will vanish when I light the lantern. Come! Let's go home! (*He takes the lantern from IEMON and, oblivious to his master's wishes, hangs it from the eaves as OIWA goes inside.*)

IEMON: What? You presumptuous fool! It's only bright out front! I said I wouldn't return because of the darkness, but since you mentioned this evening's moon, you go! Set the hawk on your arm, take the dog, and go on ahead by yourself! Idiot!

CHŌBEI: Hey! Don't order me around! Now that I'm your servant I call you "Master," but before I was your comrade, Akiyama Chōbei, just like a dog is a sidekick

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and a hawk is a companion. (*His scorn turns to anger.*) You're the master so take them yourself, you wretch! (*He flings the dog's leash at IEMON.*)

IEMON: No! Damn you! Before was before! Now you're my servant, so take them home!

CHÔBEI: A mere servant! Don't get pompous with me! Now you've moved up in the world, but not so long ago, as Tamiya Iemon, you were dirt poor and a villain! And then there's the disappearance of Oiwa after you eloped with her! Take the dog home yourself!

IEMON: No! You take it!

(*The dog is shoved aside by both IEMON and CHÔBEI to sharp tsuke beats.*)

CHÔBEI: (*Baiting the dog*): Sic him, boy!

(*The dog howls. OIWA emerges from the cottage and halts the conflict.*)

OIWA: Oh, dear! What's happened? Please don't argue. I overheard you say that before you became master and servant you had been comrades. Let me attempt to reconcile the two of you.

IEMON: If you take charge, my heart will be in it!

CHÔBEI: As long as Tamiya understands I won't apologize, I'll agree!

OIWA: All right. I shall reunite the two of you!

CHÔBEI: You are amusing! (*His mood changes as he rummages through his clothing.*) Ah! Here's the sake that I brought! Shall we start? (*He holds out the sake flask.*) Pass me your cup, miss!

OIWA: Yes! Yes! (*She rises and extends her cup to CHÔBEI.*) Hmm. Well, there are a few skewered pieces of pickled mackerel left over from today's celebrations. Help yourselves, both of you! (*She delicately removes the skewers from the pieces and serves the food in a bowl.*)

IEMON (*Leaning back against OIWA*): Oh! How interesting, these skewered pieces are linked just like the two of us.

OIWA: Why would a splendid samurai like you fall in love with a country maid?

IEMON: Such words of gratitude! Right now I'm a bachelor. He's my guarantor, ah, servant.

CHÔBEI: Yes, yes! He had a wife, but she vanished. Well, as this is your home, you have to open formalities.

OIWA: Then, let's begin! (*CHÔBEI fills the cup that OIWA holds out to him. She casts a glance at IEMON, emphasized by a sharp tsuke beat, and then drinks. Flirting.*) I wonder to whom I should next pass this sake cup?

IEMON: Do me the honor!

CHÔBEI: Oh, yes! Marinate the skewered master first!

OIWA (*To IEMON*): Allow me.

IEMON: Let's drink together.

(*IEMON and OIWA both drink sake and snuggle together lasciviously.*)

CHÔBEI (*Scornfully*): Will Master Iemon allow his servant-comrade to drink, too?

IEMON: Of course! Serve yourself!

CHÔBEI: You're too kind! *(Clutching the portable sake flask, he gulps down a few cups and rises unsteadily.)*

IEMON: My reeling servant, pass the cup and dance!

OIWA *(Mischievously)*: Yes! Dance!

CHÔBEI: No way! I'm not dancing for the two of you!

IEMON: It's a special request!

CHÔBEI: No! Who do you think you are?

IEMON *(To OIWA)*: Come on! Help me!

OIWA: Yes! Yes! Please dance! Dance!

CHÔBEI: No. This is embarrassing!

*(Offstage drums and flute music suggest a lively festival dance. OIWA cups her hands over CHÔBEI's eyes and IEMON turns him round and round. CHÔBEI whirls in a merry, erratic dance as the dog barks until, eventually, servant and dog depart to continuous tsuke beats. IEMON and OIWA are left alone.)*

IEMON: He's an utter fool! Well now, are you a farmer's daughter?

OIWA: I am a humble maid who was raised in a cottage near here.

IEMON: Oh, you were raised in a cottage, and my family name, Tamiya, sounds like "cottage!"

OIWA: Well then, I shall call you Tamiya.

IEMON: Indeed, that's my name!

OIWA *(Ominously)*: Well, I have exactly the same name!

*(Instantly, the mood transforms. To loud triple tsuke beats, OIWA strikes a mie, staring vindictively into IEMON's face. The large drum plays the wind pattern as one of the strips of paper tied to the bamboo poles flutters free, falls, and drifts toward OIWA. She deftly picks it up and presents it to IEMON.)*

OIWA: Here is my name.

IEMON *(Reading)*: This is a verse in the *One Hundred Poems* collection that is offered at the Tanabata Festival. "A rock dams the rapids . . ."

OIWA: "And, after it divides the river, I know the two branches will meet again."

Divided in the end. . . . *(Loud tsuke beats as OIWA strikes a mie. Her head thrust forward, she glares at IEMON.)* It is Tamiya whom I will meet!  
*(A single, sharp tsuke beat.)*

IEMON: Heavens! You sound like the lunatic Oiwa that everyone's gossiping about!

OIWA: I am called "Iwa," the same as the rock in the poem, and you must be the lover for whom I yearn! *(She leans against IEMON's knees and feigns a loving look at him.)*

IEMON *(Naively)*: You're the exact image of my wife, Oiwa, long ago when she was just a country girl . . .

OIWA: Separated by a rock I am your lover. From today . . .

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In "The Dream" scene, the young and beautiful ghost of Oiwa (Bandō Tamasa-  
burō V) flirts with Iemon (Kataoka Takao, later Kataoka Nizaemon XV). She is  
about to read the poem in her right hand alluding to the karma that brings them  
together: "[A] verse in the *One Hundred Poems* collection, . . . 'A rock dams the  
rapids and, after it divides the river, I know the two branches will meet again.'"  
(Umemura Yutaka, Engeki Shuppansha)

IEMON: I shall love you! Oh! I was blind to you before!

OIWA: You are fickle!

IEMON: As are the hearts of all men! *(He takes OIWA by the obi, lays down his sword, and leads her willingly into the cottage.)*

OIWA: No one can see except for your hawk.

IEMON: It's a nighthawk, just like a prostitute on the prow!

OIWA: Am I such a nighthawk?

IEMON *(Embarrassed)*: Not at all! The lamp! *(He extinguishes the lantern.)*

OIWA: Oh! Wait! There's no smudge fire for the mosquitoes!

IEMON: Indeed! I can see striped mosquitoes! *(Several STAGE ASSISTANTS manipulate sashigane poles to which are attached firefly props. IEMON pauses in a reflective mie to tsuke beats.)* Oh! It's the light of fireflies!

OIWA: In the gloom, even the fireflies fall in love with me. They resemble both the morning glories and the dew which, like a dream, vanish instantly in the blaze of day! *(She fixes her gaze on the lantern.)*

IEMON *(Beginning "divided" dialogue [warizerifu])*: Even the wilting flowers . . .

OIWA: Share the fate of dew.

IEMON: Oh! Blooming morning glories . . .

OIWA: Wilt in autumn's breeze.

IEMON: Alas!

OIWA: It is chilling!

*(They pose to a single loud tsuke beat, OIWA resting against IEMON's lap. The offstage solo song resumes to plaintive shamisen accompaniment as the bamboo screen is lowered to conceal the lovers. Then, to lively drums and flute music, CHÔBEI approaches the cottage, dragging the dog.)*

CHÔBEI: Hey! I'm so drunk! My eyes are spinning after all that sake and dancing! Lord Buddha! I feel horrible! I wonder where that wastrel Tamiya went with the girl? Even she gave me some awful looks. I'll bet they're in the cottage. That's it! Damn them! *(He embraces the dog, mocking the figures of IEMON and OIWA, which can be glimpsed through the bamboo screen. The dog howls and clamps its teeth down on CHÔBEI's hair. He chases the dog away to continuous tsuke beats.)* Ouch! Ouch! That beast made a meal of my skull! How did Tamiya seduce her so easily? I'm green with envy! *(He is breathless with excitement.)* I'll just take a peep. *(He goes to one side of the bamboo screen and peeps through the crack. A loud tsuke beat. He recoils in terror.)* My God! What's this? The girl has a monster's face! I'm out of here! I'll grab the lantern, turn tail, and run! *(He pauses to inhale and summon his courage. Then he removes the lantern from the eaves. Ominous dorodoro as the lantern takes on the visage of OIWA. He screams, petrified with fright.)* What's happening? It's incredible! *(In terror he prances backward and forward.)* Master Tamiya! Master Tamiya! *(He glances once more at the eaves.*

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*A hanging squash basket begins to acquire the face of OIWA. A sharp tsuke beat and it splits in two. Then, to continuous tsuke beats culminating in a deafening clack, the head of OIWA lunges out. CHÔBEI is paralyzed with terror.)* Dear Buddha! Dear Buddha! Let me out of here!

*(As light dorodoro plays, he flees, tumbling and in a cold sweat, toward the hanamichi. The bell tolls the hour and the offstage shamisen play a menacing tune [sugomi] as the bamboo screen rolls up. IEMON stands, perches the hawk on his arm, and puts on his sword. OIWA catches the hem of his kimono.)*

OIWA: Are you leaving, already?

IEMON: Yes. I'd better return home while the night remains young. I'll come again.  
*(OIWA takes his hand to detain him.)*

OIWA: Just a moment. You are a handsome man, and since you had a wife called Oiwa, you must be merely flirting with me!

IEMON: No! Why should I flirt? Although I had a wife called Oiwa, she was an evil woman. I left her because she was a damned nasty case!  
*(A sharp tsuke beat.)*

OIWA *(Anguished)*: Have you eternally forsaken your former wife, of whom you speak so spitefully, Iemon? *(She fixes IEMON with a venomous stare.)*

IEMON *(Shuddering)*: Somehow your expression and that of Oiwa . . .

OIWA: Resemble each other? The light of the moon should guide me to Buddha's paradise, but instead it chills like the vengeful face of Oiwa. The twin tides of the same moon pound the damming rock with pain from this world.  
*(A sharp tsuke beat.)*

IEMON: Heavens! What did you say?

OIWA: Vengeance on Iemon!

IEMON: My God!

*(IEMON recoils from OIWA, and they cut a mie to continuous, furious tsuke pattern [uchiage]. The hawk changes into a rat and leaps at IEMON. Light dorodoro rumbling. A black curtain falls to cover the moon. A sharp ki clack. Suddenly OIWA reveals herself as a ghost to the reverberations of crashing dorodoro. Both OIWA and IEMON strike an aggressive mie to triple tsuke beats, the ghost with arms outstretched and IEMON with legs set apart and eyes glaring defiance.)*

IEMON: Has revenge completely possessed you?

OIWA: To hell you come, Tamiya!

IEMON: No way!

*(Assailed by magical forces, IEMON attacks wildly. Powerful dorodoro. Several STAGE ASSISTANTS attack IEMON with flickering, phosphorescent green "soul fires" burning at the ends of sashigane. IEMON fights the fires to the brink of agonized exhaustion with sword slashes punctuated by double tsuke beats. He is sur-*

prised by flickering green fire that lights up the spinning wheel's frame. A sharp tsuke beat. Now a four-wheeled cart, which has lost a wheel, catches fire and starts to charge around in circles. IEMON, terrified, and OIWA strike a mie to triple tsuke beats. IEMON attempts to escape from OIWA's extended arms until he collapses, exhausted. Joint mie to thunderous tsuke beats. OIWA and IEMON sink together on a trap [seri] into hell to deafening drums. The banner splits, and the kokoro character falls to a sharp ki clack.)

### Snake Mountain Hermitage

(A loud ki clack. The bell tolls and the stage revolves. Another ki clack signals the scene to begin. The set darkens as large offstage drum plays snow pattern [yuki no oto] to indicate the arrival of winter; offstage shamisen play in the background. The interior of a hermitage is seen, with grey walls, a Buddhist altar at center, and a rear door to the left. Outside, snow lies piled up against a log gate, right, and covers four wooden grave tablets and a willow tree. Seated and talking together at center are JŌNEN, the black-robed master of the hermitage, who clasps a strand of rosary beads, and SHINDŌ GENSHIRŌ, IEMON's father, dressed in white pilgrim's attire. JŌNEN's FOLLOWERS sit in a row across the back of the stage. The shamisen abruptly ceases. In an adjoining room, left, IEMON lies in painful exhaustion under a paper mosquito net. With a rattling sound IEMON, scabbard in hand, rises and tears the net to pieces, each slash accompanied by double tsuke beats. He is dressed in a dirty black kimono and grey obi typical of a destitute rōnin. His face is pale and feverish, framed by bushy, unkempt hair that signifies illness bordering on madness. JŌNEN's FOLLOWERS mill around IEMON helplessly. IEMON bursts from the room to continuous tsuke beats.)

IEMON: You bitch, Oiwa! Stand where I can see you! (He is on the verge of drawing his sword again but is detained by JŌNEN and GENSHIRŌ. IEMON sees their faces and experiences a flash of recognition, and his anger subsides as he falls in a heap beside them.) Oh, was it a dream? How terrifying! I saw fire carts from hell in the land of the living! (He tears himself from his dream.) Oh, Lord Buddha! Oh, Lord Buddha!

(Exhausted, IEMON heaves a sigh of relief. JŌNEN faces rear and raises his arms to calm his FOLLOWERS.)

GENSHIRŌ: Hello, son! Don't you know your father?

IEMON: Ah! Is it really you? Why are you here?

GENSHIRŌ: An old rōnin cannot serve two masters in a lifetime, so I'm in the middle of a pilgrimage to pray for salvation. (Changing the subject.) Your bout of illness . . .

IEMON: Is the result of a curse by a miserable ghost of a woman!

GENSHIRŌ: Well! Are you recovering?

IEMON: Yes, I feel all right, although occasionally I have bouts of fever. In fact, the master of the hermitage brought me here.

GENSHIRÔ: I didn't know that. (To JÔNEN.) I'm indebted to you.

JÔNEN: You're much too kind!

GENSHIRÔ: In that case, I'll stay a little while at the hermitage.

IEMON: Good! Then we shall be father and son until this snow lets up! We'll chat later.

*(To an offstage musical accompaniment the temple bell tolls the lateness of the hour. The FOLLOWERS rise and filter out through the back door followed by JÔNEN and GENSHIRÔ. The music increases in tempo. Ominous dorodoro. Alone, IEMON remains seated. His twisted face, unsteady hands, and limp arms all indicate physical torment by the ghost of OIWA. The sliding door opens and OKUMA, attired in a drab kimono, trots toward IEMON.)*

OKUMA (Full of concern): Oh, Iemon! My divorced husband, Genshirô, has unexpectedly dropped into the hermitage. Do you remember that after the divorce I entered the service of Lord Moronao? If I take the letter that I left with you to Moronao we'll have money to burn!

IEMON: In any event, I want out of this hermitage! The payoff will be a position of rank in Moronao's household in the near future if the letter does the trick!

OKUMA: Genshirô will go berserk when he learns of our deal with Moronao!

IEMON: No question! At any rate, I'll soon be strong again. By the way, have you had any trouble with rats lately?

OKUMA: Are you joking?! Today there have been hordes!

IEMON: Born in the Year of the Rat, so rat by nature, Oiwa by name! Her spite torments both mother and son!

*(Quiet offstage shamisen and percussion accompaniment [mokugyô iri] creates a melancholy mood. As the large drum softly plays snow patterns, KOBAYASHI HEINAI arrives at the door. He is dressed in a magnificent formal costume, wears the two swords of a samurai, and carries an umbrella with a bull's-eye design. One FOOTMAN lugs a heavy black box. IEMON hears the arrival and goes to his side of the door, where he waits, doubled over in pain. OKUMA follows and sits close behind him.)*

HEINAI (Calling at the door): I've come on business for Iemon, who is staying at this hermitage.

IEMON: Kobayashi Heinai! Come in out of the snowstorm!

*(IEMON slowly staggers away from the door. HEINAI folds his umbrella, passes it to the FOOTMAN, and enters. IEMON and OKUMA bow respectfully. HEINAI marches past them to take the seat of honor, left.)*

HEINAI: Good! After I examine the letter, which we discussed before, and ensure that the seal is authentic, I shall escort you to your investiture by Lord Moronao.



(To the FOOTMAN.) Display the clothes and swords of a retainer, which Lord Moronao has sent.

FOOTMAN: At once!

(The FOOTMAN places the gifts on a purple cloth that covers a large wooden tray.

OKUMA places the tray in front of IEMON, who bows deeply.)

HEINAI (Formally): Accept these gifts from Lord Moronao.

IEMON (Bowing): Thank you. I shall entrust myself to you regarding the investiture.

HEINAI: Now show me the letter. It is time for the inspection.

IEMON (Rattled): Ah! Because of my illness, I have entrusted it to someone nearby. I shall reclaim it later and give it to you then.

OKUMA (Suspiciously): Hey, son! Why did you part with so precious a letter?

IEMON (To OKUMA): What? Don't worry, Mother! (To HEINAI.) In any event, please inspect it later.

(HEINAI rises and marches imperiously to the door while IEMON and OKUMA bow deeply.)

HEINAI (Turning back): I shall come again, and then I want to examine that letter without fail!

IEMON: Yes, sir! Please convey my best wishes to Lord Moronao.

HEINAI: I'll take my leave.

(HEINAI exchanges bows with IEMON and OKUMA. Offstage narimono accompaniment as the FOOTMAN opens HEINAI's umbrella and hands it to HEINAI. The bell tolls. HEINAI and the FOOTMAN depart. OKUMA rises and circles around to IEMON's left.)

OKUMA (Anxiously): Son! Where in the world did you put that precious letter?

IEMON: Chôbei blackmailed me! He said that he would turn me in to the police unless I loaned it to him as collateral.

OKUMA: Oh! So it was to hold him off for a while.

IEMON: I'll recover it. Don't worry!

OKUMA: Heavens! It's already dusk!

IEMON: Soon Oiwa will afflict both of us with fever. Don't go soft on me!

OKUMA: Let's stay on guard!

IEMON: I'll light the lamp. (The bell tolls. Offstage shamisen and singing establish a peaceful mood. IEMON and OKUMA stand and strike a mie to double tsuke beats. They turn away from each other. OKUMA enters the room to prepare for sleep. Shamisen and song continue as IEMON lights a small lamp and opens the door. He picks up the water ladle and looks pensively at the winter scene.) Ah! Mounds of snow, dazzlingly white! (He catches sight of CHÔBEI asleep by the side of the snow-covered log gate. IEMON sneers unsympathetically, crosses outside, and sees the grave tablet of OIWA. He speaks in a trembling voice weakened by the curse of

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*the ghost.*) It is inscribed with both her posthumous and worldly names. Even if I pray for her she'll never achieve rebirth. At summer's Bon Festival for the dead she'll be terrifying! (*Fearfully.*) Still, I'd better pray for the brat and her just in case. (*He pours the holy water from a bucket and then kneels near the grave tablet. Eerie flute music [netori bue], suggestive of wind blowing through crevices, signals the appearance of OIWA's ghost. The bell tolls repeatedly and the stage plunges into darkness. A flame circles within the paper lantern. Loud dorodoro as the flame starts to burn a hole in the paper. Thunderous dorodoro and offstage narimono as the silhouette of OIWA's face becomes visible. Finally, the lantern splits into two halves [chōchin nuke], and OIWA's ghastly head thrusts through the gap. Netori bue music. Dorodoro resumes and the set is again plunged into darkness. A sharp tsuke beat as the light begins to return. The bloodstained body of the ghost has emerged from the lantern and stands, cradling IEMON's infant son, to the left of IEMON. IEMON trudges a few steps forward and then discerns the shape of the ghost. Dorodoro. IEMON strikes a mie of horror in a half-standing position. Then he sits and speaks derisively.*) Vindictive ghost! Listen! You forced me to kill my father-in-law, Itō Kihei, and my new bride on our wedding night. Your curse also drowned my mother-in-law and her wet-nurse. To crown it all, you cursed your own family and killed our newborn son. What a loving mother! (*OIWA points twice at the infant and raises her hand to the scars on her face to remind IEMON of the abandonment of his son and of her own poisoning. IEMON kneels and prays. Sharp tsuke beats. OIWA clamps both hands over her ears. Then, trailing blood in the snow, she quickly circles IEMON and surrenders the infant. Dorodoro. OIWA exits right, one arm pointing at IEMON. He drops the infant. A sharp ki clack and the infant instantly turns into a stone statue of Jizō, the Bodhisattva of children. A sharp tsuke beat. IEMON hurriedly retreats inside the house. CHŌBEI enters right looking like a wild man from the country. IEMON is surrounded by scampering rats manipulated on the ends of sashigane by STAGE ASSISTANTS.*)

CHŌBEI (*Tremulous*): Beasts! (*He kicks the rats away and enters the house.*)

IEMON: What spite! (*He stares into space. Dorodoro resumes.*)

CHŌBEI (*Hearing IEMON's voice, enters the hermitage*): Is that you, Master Iemon?

IEMON: Chōbei! Am I glad to see you! Listen! I've come by a stipend with the house of Moronao thanks to that letter I loaned you, so I want it back right away!

(*CHŌBEI sits in front of the Buddhist altar.*)

CHŌBEI: All right! I'll return it. When you entrusted it to me I took it home the same evening. However, I was overrun by a swarm of rats, which gnawed everything from my hair down to my fingernails. It was sheer hell! I'll return it! Anything to get rid of it!

- IEMON: Did rats attack you, too? Oh! The ghost of Oiwa is here as well! *(He strikes a terrified mie to triple tsuke beats.)* Lord Buddha! Lord Buddha! Hurry up and bring me the letter!
- CHÔBEI: You've killed a lot of people and already laid the blame on Kanzô, Bansuke, and myself. Look, Tamiya! Why do you want the letter so badly?
- IEMON: My mother originally belonged to Moronao's clan, so it was easy for her to obtain my entry into his household. *(He abruptly stops.)* Do you hear anything? *(Crashing dorodoro as IEMON is distracted. The actor who plays OIWA is attached to a wheel hidden behind the altar. The wheel is rotated forward, and OIWA descends headfirst over CHÔBEI's head. Taking a hand towel [tenugui] from around his neck, she slowly strangles him. He attempts to let out a scream, but OIWA slaps one hand over his mouth. He falls dead to one tsuke beat. The wheel is rotated backward, and OIWA drags the corpse into the compartment at the altar's rear. IEMON, ignorant of OIWA's attack, suddenly detects the ghost and strikes a frightened mie to triple tsuke beats. He staggers. Blood begins to drip from the top of the altar. Each drop hits the floor to the accompaniment of a tsuke beat. Seeing the blood, IEMON summons all his willpower to look up.)*
- IEMON: Is this the curse of Oiwa, too? *(A letter falls from the altar's crossbeam and IEMON grabs it.)* The letter I entrusted to Chôbei!  
*(Just then, HEINAI, attended by four FOOTMEN, comes rushing along the hanamichi to continuous tsuke beats.)*
- HEINAI *(From the door)*: Iemon! Iemon! Show me that letter you promised a little while ago!
- IEMON: Welcome! Yet, from the garb of your party, I have some doubts as to your purpose.
- HEINAI: The reason for my appearance is that I have orders to apprehend one Sekiguchi Kanzô and his servant, Bansuke, for the murder of a retainer of Lord Moronao, one Itô Kihei, and of Itô's granddaughter. Now I need to see that letter, so get a move on!
- IEMON: Verify it for yourself!  
*(IEMON presents the letter to HEINAI. To a soft, menacing rumble of dorodoro drums HEINAI unrolls the letter. A sharp tsuke beat.)*
- HEINAI *(Aghast)*: My God! The seal and the crest have been gnawed away by rats! Now it's just a scrap of worthless paper! What's happened here?  
*(IEMON takes it and, staring at it in disbelief, strikes a mie.)*
- IEMON: It was the work of Oiwa's damned rats! *(Despondently.)* There's no hope!
- HEINAI: My visit has been a complete waste of time! I'll inform my master. *(To his FOOTMEN.)* Collect the gifts, footmen!
- FOOTMEN: Yes, sir! *(They pick up the tray containing the gifts.)*
- IEMON *(Despairingly)*: All the gifts!

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HEINAI: I shall return to Lord Moronao with my report. Fool, Tamiya! Fool!

*(HEINAI laughs in derision. Loud dorodoro as HEINAI and his FOOTMEN charge off along the hanamichi. IEMON strikes a mie to tsuke beats, staring blankly. At this moment, GENSHIRÔ peeks out.)*

IEMON: The curse of Oiwa's ghost and the deeds of the rats have confounded my mother's plans for my promotion. Erecting this grave tablet for Oiwa was futile!

*(As he starts toward the door, GENSHIRÔ restrains him.)*

GENSHIRÔ: Son! You're angry, but don't break that tablet!

IEMON: I had intended to hold a proper prayer service for Oiwa, but she won't listen.

*(IEMON marches toward the grave tablet, but again GENSHIRÔ stops him.)*

GENSHIRÔ: Wait! You haven't an ounce of compassion! You're just a traitorous *rônin*!

*(Rage wells up inside him.)* This is good! A restless ghost and a dissatisfied traitor! You even relied upon your mother, who had wheedled herself into the household of our archenemy, Moronao! Unprincipled son! You've tarred your own father with a traitor's brush! You despicable wretch!

*(IEMON thinks quickly and then hits on a deception.)*

IEMON: Father! I infiltrated our enemy's household in order to assist my loyal comrades!

GENSHIRÔ: Lies! All lies! Traitor, Tamiya! Die! *(Momentarily forgetting that he is an ascetic, he reaches for the sword he no longer carries. Chagrined, he strikes a mie to tsuke beats.)* I'm no longer a samurai because I've taken to the roads as a begging pilgrim. *(Then he picks up the T-shaped wooden hammer used to strike his bell and thrashes IEMON, each hit accompanied by a double tsuke beat.)* I disown you! We are no longer father and son!

IEMON: What! My own father disowning me!

GENSHIRÔ: I'm not your father! Do as you please!

*(GENSHIRÔ continues to beat IEMON. Shrill music is heard and a bell tolls the hour as GENSHIRÔ goes inside.)*

IEMON *(Angrily)*: Obstinate antique! Now I'm disowned as well as cursed! Damn you!

*(Continuous tsuke beats as the sliding door opens to reveal OKUMA in pain.)*

OKUMA: Oh, no! Rats! Rats!

*(Menacing dorodoro. Rats, held on sashigane by STAGE ASSISTANTS, dart at OKUMA from all directions as she frenziedly tries to dodge them.)*

IEMON *(Dismayed)*: Come on, Ma! Take heart! Chin up! Come on, Ma! *(Desperately.)*

Come on! *(To the rats.)* Vermin! *(He picks up the wooden hammer and slashes left and right, each movement accompanied by a double tsuke beat. Eventually, he gets rid of the rats.)* Oh, the fever again! Pray for me!

*(JÔNEN and his FOLLOWERS enter through the back door in response to IEMON's distress.)*

JŌNEN: Is it the sickness again? Quickly! Pray!

FOLLOWERS: We understand! *(They encircle OKUMA by linking hands while IEMON remains outside looking anguished.)* All together now! Pray!

JŌNEN: Help us, Buddha!

FOLLOWERS: Help us, Buddha!

*(IEMON, entering the rosary circle, joins in the chanting. Dorodoro continues, interspersed with double tsuke beats. OIWA revolves around the circle and stares vindictively at OKUMA, who is wracked with pain. No one apart from OKUMA and IEMON can see OIWA. Light, menacing dorodoro. OIWA seizes OKUMA by the collar and sends her body into massive contortions. Loud tsuke beats. The prayer circle disintegrates and the FOLLOWERS fall back. IEMON waves his sword above his head in a futile gesture. Loud tsuke beats.)*

IEMON: Come on! Pray! *(They all chant more loudly. OIWA strikes a mie to continuous tsuke beats while she stares at IEMON. Then she resumes tormenting OKUMA.)* I feel the eyes of the ghost again! *(Horried, IEMON strikes a mie to triple tsuke beats.)* Pray! *(They chant repeatedly as OIWA seizes OKUMA and, to the accompaniment of a flute, rips out OKUMA's throat with her teeth. IEMON watches his mother die with a gurgling sound. The chanters scream in terror and rush out the rear door.)* Lord Buddha! What a way for my dear mother to die! *(IEMON is at a loss for words. He approaches the corpse and inspects her bloodstained throat. He clasps the hilt of his sword.)* Ghost! *(He draws his sword and slashes. Dorodoro reaches a crescendo as OIWA afflicts IEMON with spasms of agony. She dangles upside down behind him and approaches the wall of the room. IEMON sees her, totters, and then strikes at the wall. It collapses, exposing the corpse of GENSHIRŌ, dangling by a rope. IEMON watches OIWA vanish into the wall.)* Lord Buddha! Father's hanged himself and I've lost both my parents in the blink of an eye! What heartbreaking corpses! All because of Oiwa! Oh! Oh!

*(To continuous tsuke beats SEKIGUCHI KANZŌ and BANSUKE run onto the stage from the hanamichi, apparently seeking refuge. They barge into the room, and IEMON recoils in fear. Urgent tsuke beats accompany HEINAI and FOOTMEN running onto the hanamichi searching for the two. KANZŌ and BANSUKE peep in at the door.)*

KANZŌ: Iemon! I confessed to all my past misdeeds, and both of us were arrested.

BANSUKE: However, he avoided implicating himself under cross-examination, and when the interrogators' vigilance lapsed, we ran for it and fled here.

KANZŌ: We're giving you time to run, too!

*(They vigorously urge IEMON to flee.)*

IEMON: So you came all the way here out of loyalty to me!

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KANZÔ and BANSUKE: Hide yourself! Disappear!

IEMON: I get it. But what will I do for money?

*(KANZÔ and BANSUKE rise and exchange glances. A sharp tsuke beat.)*

KANZÔ and BANSUKE: Got you!

*(They seize IEMON, but he breaks free, draws his sword, and lunges at them. Each movement in the combat scene [tachimawari] is emphasized by a double tsuke beat, and each series of strikes and parries culminates in a mie.)*

IEMON: A trap? Just as I thought!

HEINAI: Catch him!

KANZÔ and BANSUKE: Got you!

*(Martial drum patterns accompany the tachimawari. They again try to seize IEMON, but he defeats KANZÔ, BANSUKE, HEINAI, and all the FOOTMEN one by one. Weary from his exertions, IEMON stands just outside the door.)*

IEMON: A murderer haunted by a ghost can't escape heaven's net, but I'll try anyway.

*(A sharp ki clack. The stage revolves to reveal a desolate, snow-covered scene partially obscured in a blizzard of falling snow. It appears to be far from the hermitage. YOMOSHICHI enters left wearing a light-grey outer kimono with his head covered in a basket hat. He knocks IEMON off-balance from behind and then discards the hat, which is removed by a STAGE ASSISTANT. He begins to take off his outer kimono, preparing to fight. The kimono half-removed, YOMOSHICHI strikes an aggressive mie with one arm and one leg thrust forward. Triple tsuke beats.)*

YOMOSHICHI *(Pausing)*: Hold it right there, Tamiya Iemon!

IEMON: Oh! It's Satô Yomoshichi! Why attack me?

YOMOSHICHI: You are the enemy of Oiwa, the elder sister of my wife, Osode. I am her avenger!

IEMON *(Sarcastically)*: Bravo, Satô! Don't get in my way!

YOMOSHICHI: On guard, Tamiya!

*(Martial drum patterns accompany their fight. They pose aggressively, slash, and pass each other several times. YOMOSHICHI pins IEMON's sword under his own. Tsuke beat. They battle until YOMOSHICHI scores a hit. YOMOSHICHI glowers at IEMON, who holds his wounded right shoulder. They pose in a joint mie to double tsuke beats. Light dorodoro. Flames erupt at the end of poles held by STAGE ASSISTANTS to signal that OIWA is inflicting pain on IEMON. Tsuke beats accompany his agonized mie. Numerous rats on sashigane appear and swarm up IEMON's sword, forcing him to drop it. YOMOSHICHI, on bended knee, runs the standing IEMON through. With YOMOSHICHI triumphant and IEMON*

*stunned, they strike a joint mie to furious tsuke beats [uchiage]. Loud dorodoro, which swiftly fades.)*

**YOMOSHICHI:** *(Addressing OIWA):* Find rebirth in Buddha's paradise!

**IEMON:** You wretch, Yomoshichi!

*(YOMOSHICHI and the dying IEMON pose. Accelerating ki clacks as the curtain is pushed closed on the final tableau. Loud double ki clacks end the performance.)*