

*Ichiniki - Brothel*

# *Chūshingura*

*(The Treasury of Loyal Retainers)*

A Puppet Play

by

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and NAMIKI SENRYŪ

*Translated by Donald Keene*

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## Act Seven

NARRATOR: If you would dally among flowers you will find in Gion a full range of colors. East, south, north, and west, with a glitter as bright as if Amida's Pure Land has been gilded anew, Gion sparkles with courtesans and geishas, so lovely as to steal away the senses of even the most jaded man, and leave him a raving fool.

KUDAYŪ: Is anybody here? Where's the master? Master!

MASTER: Rush, rush, rush! Who's there? Whom have I the pleasure of serving? Why, it's Master Ono Kodayū! How formal of you to ask to be shown in!

KUDAYŪ: I've brought a gentleman with me who's here for the first time. You seem awfully busy, but have you a room you can show this gentleman?

MASTER: Indeed I have, sir. Tonight that big spender Yuranosuke had the bright idea of gathering together all the best-known women of the Quarter. The downstairs rooms are full, but the detached wing is free.

KUDAYŪ: Full of cobwebs, no doubt.

MASTER: More of your usual sarcasm, sir?

KUDAYŪ: No, I'm just being careful not to get entangled at my age in a whore's cobweb.

## ACT SEVEN

MASTER: I'd never have guessed it. I can't accommodate you downstairs, then. I'll prepare an upstairs room.—Servants! Light the lamps and bring saké and tobacco.

NARRATOR: He calls out in a loud voice. Drums and samisens resound from the back rooms.

KUDAYŪ: What do you think, Bannai? Do you hear how Yuranosuke is carrying on?

BANNAI: He seems completely out of his head. Of course, we've had a series of private reports from you, Kodayū, but not even my master Moronao suspected how far gone Yuranosuke was. Moronao told me to come up to the capital and look over the situation. He said I should report anything suspicious. I'd never have believed it if I hadn't seen it with my own eyes. It's worse than I imagined. And what has become of his son, Rikiya?

KUDAYŪ: He comes here once in a while and the two of them have a wild time together. It's incredible that they don't feel any embarrassment in each other's presence. But tonight I've come with a plan for worming out the innermost secrets of Yuranosuke's heart. I'll tell you about it when we're alone. Let's go upstairs.

BANNAI: After you.

KUDAYŪ: Well, then, I'll lead the way.

NARRATOR (*sings*):

Though in truth your heart  
Has no thought for me,  
Your lips pretend you are in love,  
With great bewitchery—

JŪTARŌ: Yagorō and Kitahachi—this is the teahouse where Yuranosuke amuses himself. It's called Ichiriki. Oh, Hciemon, we'll call you when the time comes. Go wait in the kitchen.

HEIEMON: At your service, sir. Please do what you can for me.  
JŪTARŌ: Is anyone there? I want to talk to somebody.

MAID: Yes, sir. Who is it, please?

JŪTARŌ: We've come on business with Yuranosuke. Go in and tell him that Yazama Jūtarō, Senzaki Yagorō, and Takemori Kitahachi are here. Several times we've sent a man to fetch him, but he never seems to leave this place. So the three of us have come to him. There's something we must discuss with him. We ask that he meet us. Be sure and tell him that.

MAID: I'm sorry to tell you, sir, but Yuranosuke has been drinking steadily for the past three days. You won't get much sense out of him, even if you see him. He's not himself.

JŪTARŌ: That may be, but please tell him what I said.

MAID: Yes, sir.

JŪTARŌ: Yagorō, did you hear her?

YAGORŌ: I did, and I'm amazed. At first I thought it was some trick of his to throw the enemy off the track. But he has abandoned himself to his pleasures more than convincingly. I simply don't understand it.

KITAHACHI: It's just as I said. He's not the same man in spirit.

Our best plan would be to break in on him—

JŪTARŌ: No, first we'll have a heart-to-heart talk.

YAGORŌ: Very well, we'll wait for him here.

PROSTITUTE (*sings*): Come where my hands clap, hands clap, hands clap. (*Yuranosuke enters. He is blindfolded.*)

YURANOSUKE: I'll catch you! I'll catch you!

PROSTITUTE: Come on, Yura the blind man! We're waiting!

YURANOSUKE: I'll catch you and make you drink.—Here!—

Now I've got you! We'll have some saké! Bring on the saké! (*He grabs Jūtarō, taking him for his partner in blind-man's buff.*)

JŪTARŌ: Come to yourself, Yuranosuke. I'm Yazama Jūtarō.  
What in the world are you doing?

YURANOSUKE: Good heavens! What an awful mistake!

PROSTITUTE: Oh, the kill-joys! Look at them, Sakae. Have you ever seen such sour-looking samurai? Are they all in the same party, do you think?

SAKAE: It certainly looks that way. They all have the same fierce look.

JŪTARŌ: Girls, we've come on business with Mr. Ōboshi. We'd appreciate it if you left the room for a while.

PROSTITUTES: We guessed as much. Yura, we'll be going to the back room. Come join us soon. This way, everybody.

JŪTARŌ: Yuranosuke, you remember me. I'm Yazama Jūtarō.  
KITAHACHI: I'm Takemori Kitahachi.

YATARŌ: And I am Senzaki Yatarō. We've come here hoping to have a talk with you. I trust you're awake now?

YURANOSUKE: Thank you all for having come to see me. What have you in mind?

JŪTARŌ: When do we leave for Kamakura?

YURANOSUKE: That's a very important question you've asked me. There's a song in *Yosaku from Tamba*<sup>37</sup> that goes, "When you leave for Edo, oh so far away. . . ." Ha, ha. Forgive me, gentlemen, I'm drunk.

THREE MEN: A man's character stays the same even when he's drunk, they say. If you're not in your right mind, the three of us will sober you up.

HEIEMON: Don't do anything rash, please. I hope you'll forgive me, gentlemen, but I'd like a word with him. Please hold off for a while before you start anything. Master Yuranosuke—I am Teraoka Heiemon. I am very glad to see you're in such good spirits.

<sup>37</sup> A famous play by Chikamatsu Monzaemon. Cf. Keene, tr., *Major Plays of Chikamatsu*, p. 94.

YURANOSUKE: Teraoka Heiemon? Who might you be? Are you that fleet-footed foot soldier who was sent as a courier to the north?

HEIEMON: The same, sir. It was while I was in the north that I learned our master had committed *seppuku*, and I was dumfounded. I started off for home, running so fast I all but flew through the air. On the way I was told that his lordship's mansion had been confiscated and his retainers dispersed. You can imagine what a shock that was. I served his lordship only as a foot soldier, but I am as much indebted to him as anyone. I went to Kamakura, intending to kill Moronao, our master's enemy. For three months I watched for my chance, disguising myself as a beggar, but our enemy is guarded so strongly I couldn't even get close to him. I felt I had no choice but to disembowel myself, but I thought then of my parents in the country, and I went back home, despondent though I was. But then—surely it was a heaven-sent revelation—I learned about the league you gentlemen have formed. How happy and thankful that made me! I didn't even bother to take my things with me, but went to call on these gentlemen at their lodgings. I begged with all my heart for them to intercede in my behalf. They praised me and called me a brave fellow, and promised to plead for me with the chief. So I've come along with them here, encouraged by their assurances. Moronao's mansion—

YURANOSUKE: What's all this? You're not so much light of foot as exceedingly light of tongue. It's quite true that I felt a certain amount of indignation—about as big as a flea's head split by a hatchet—and tried forming a league of forty or fifty men, but what a crazy notion that was! I realized when I thought about it calmly that if we failed

in our mission our heads would roll, and if we succeeded we'd have to commit *seppuku* afterwards. Either way, it was certain death. It was like taking expensive medicine, then hanging yourself afterwards because you couldn't pay for the cure. You're a foot soldier with a stipend of three *ryō* and an allowance of three men's rations. Now don't get angry—for you to throw away your life attacking the enemy, in return for a pittance suitable for a beggar priest, would be like putting on a performance of grand *kagura* to express your gratitude for some green *nori*.<sup>38</sup> My stipend was 1,500 *koku*.<sup>39</sup> Compared to you, I might take enemy heads by the bushel and still not do my share. And that's why I gave up the idea. Do you follow me? At any rate, this uncertain world (*sings*) is just that sort of place. *Tsuten Tsutsuten Tsutsuten*.<sup>40</sup> Oh, when I hear the samisens playing like that I can't resist.

HEIEMON: I can't believe that is you speaking, Yuranosuke. Each man has only one life in this world, whether he's a wretch like myself with a bare income of three rations, or a rich man like you with 1,500 *koku*, and there is no high or low in the debt of gratitude we owe our master. But there's no disputing family lineage. I know it's presumptuous and rude for a miserable creature like myself to beg to join distinguished gentlemen who could have stood as deputies for our master. It's like a monkey imi-

<sup>38</sup> *Kagura* is the sacred music and dance performed at Shinto shrines; by "grand *kagura*" is meant the especially exalted variety of the Great Shrine of Ise. Worshipers normally offered performances in return for blessings received, but a gift of *nori*, a kind of edible seaweed, would certainly not require such an elaborate display of thanks.

<sup>39</sup> The stipends of samurai were calculated in *koku*, a measure of rice a little less than five bushels.

<sup>40</sup> Sounds intended to suggest the music of the samisen.

tating a man. But I want to go with you, even if it is only to carry your shoes or shoulder your baggage. Please take me with you. Sir, please listen to me, sir.—Oh, he seems to have fallen asleep.

KITAHACHI: Come, Heiemon. There's no point in wasting any more breath on him. Yuranosuke is as good as dead. Well, Yazama and Sensaki, have you see his true character? Shall we act as we agreed?

YAGORŌ: By all means, as a warning to the others in our league. Are you ready?

NARRATOR: They close in on Yuranosuke, but a cry from Heiemon stops them. With calming gestures he comes up beside them.

HEIEMON: It seems to me, as I turn things over in my mind, Yuranosuke has undergone many hardships in his efforts to avenge our master, ever since they were parted by death. He has had to worry, like a hunted man, over every noise and footfall, and stifle his resentment at people's abuse. He couldn't have survived this long if he hadn't taken so heavily to drink. Wait till he's sober before you deal with him.

NARRATOR: Forcibly restraining them, he leads them into the next room. Their shadows on the other side of the sliding door, cast by a light that illuminates the distinction between good and evil,<sup>41</sup> are blotted out as the moon sinks behind the mountains.

Rikiya, Yuranosuke's son, having run the whole *ri* and a half from Yamashina, arrives breathless. He peeps inside

<sup>41</sup> An obscure passage, perhaps intended to suggest that the light distinguishes these good men from the evil Kudayū, who is lurking in the next room. The phrase "moon sinks behind the mountains" is used also to modify the place-name Yamashina in the next line.

and sees his father lying asleep. Afraid that people may hear, he goes up to his father's pillow and rattles his sword in its scabbard, instead of a horse's bit.<sup>42</sup> At the clink of the hilt Yuranosuke suddenly rises.

YURANOSUKE: Is that you, Rikiya? Has something urgent come up? Is that why you rattled the scabbard? Keep your voice low.

RIKIYA: An express courier just brought a secret letter from Lady Kaoyo.

YURANOSUKE: Was there no verbal message besides?

RIKIYA: Our enemy Kō no Moronao's petition to return to his province has been granted and he will shortly start for home. Her ladyship said the details would be found in her letter.

YURANOSUKE: Very good. You return home and send a palanquin for me tonight. Be off now.

NARRATOR: Without a flicker of hesitation Rikiya sets off for Yamashina. Yuranosuke, worried about the contents of the letter, is about to cut the seal when a voice calls.

KUDAYŪ: Master Ōboshi! Master Yuranosuke! It's me, Ono Kudayū. I'd like a word with you.

YURANOSUKE: Well! I haven't seen you in a long time. How wrinkled you've become in the year since we last met. Have you come to this house to unfurrow those wrinkles? What an old lecher you are!

KUDAYŪ: Yura—they say little faults are overlooked in a great achievement. The fast life you've led here in the gay quarters, in defiance of people's criticism, will pave the foundation for your achievements. I consider you a hero, a man of great promise.

<sup>42</sup> Samurai dozing on horseback were said to awaken to the sound of the horse's bit.

YURANOSUKE: Ha, ha. What a hard line you take! You've set up a perfect battery of catapults against me. But let's talk about something else.

KUDAYŪ: There's no point in pretending, Yuranosuke. Your dissipation is, in fact—

YURANOSUKE: You think it's a trick to enable me to attack the enemy?

KUDAYŪ: Of course I do.

YURANOSUKE: How you flatter me! I thought you'd laugh at me as a fool, a madman—over forty and still a slave to physical pleasure. But you tell me it's all a scheme to attack the enemy! Thank you, good Kudayū. You've made me happy.

KUDAYŪ: Then you have no intention of avenging our master Enya?

YURANOSUKE: Not in the least. I know that when we were about to turn over the house and the domain I said I would die fighting in the castle, but that was only to please her ladyship. I remember how you stalked out of the room at the time, saying that resistance would make us enemies of the shogun. But we continued our debate in deadly earnest. What idiots we were! In any case, our discussion got nowhere. We said we'd commit *seppuku* before his lordship's tomb, but one after another we stole out the back gate. I have you to thank for being able to enjoy these pleasures here, and I haven't forgotten our old friendship. Don't act so stiff! Relax with me.

KUDAYŪ: Yes, I see now, when I think back on the old days, that I used to be quite a fraud myself. Shall I show you my true nature and have a drink with you? How about it, Yuranosuke? The first cup we've shared in a long time.

YURANOSUKE: Are you going to ask for the cup back, as at a formal banquet?

KUDAYŪ: Pour the liquor and I'll drink.

YURANOSUKE: Drink up and I'll pour.

KUDAYŪ: Have a full cup. Here, I'll give you something to eat with it.

NARRATOR: He picks up in his chopsticks a piece of octopus that happens to be near him and holds it out to Yuranosuke.

YURANOSUKE: Putting out my hand, I accept an octopus foot. Thank you!

KUDAYŪ: Yuranosuke—tomorrow is the anniversary of the death of our master, Enya Hangan. The night before the anniversary is supposed to be especially important. Are you going to eat that octopus and think nothing of it?

YURANOSUKE: Of course I'll eat it. Or have you had word that Lord Enya has turned into an octopus? What foolish ideas you get into your head! You and I are *rōnin* now, thanks to Lord Hangan's recklessness. That's why I hold a grudge against him. I haven't the faintest intention of becoming a vegetarian for his sake, and I'm delighted to sample the fish you've so kindly provided.

NARRATOR: With the greatest aplomb he gulps down the fish in a single mouthful, a sight that stuns even the crafty Kudayū into silence.

YURANOSUKE: This fish is no good for drinking. We'll get them to wring a chicken's neck and give us chicken in the pot. Let's go to the back room. Come along, girls, and sing for us.

KUDAYŪ (*sings*):

On uncertain legs he staggers off

To the lively beat of the samisen

*Tere tsuku teretsuku tsutsuten tsutsuten . . .*

YURANOSUKE (*to jesters*): Hey, you small fry! Do you expect to be let off without getting soused?

NARRATOR: Amid all the bustle he goes within. Sagisaka Bannai, who has been observing everything from beginning to end, comes down from the second floor.

BANNAI: I've kept close watch on him, Kudayū, and I can't believe a man so rotten at the core he'd even eat animal food on the anniversary of his master's death will ever attack his enemy. I intend to report this to my master Moronao, and to recommend that he relax his precautions and open his gates.

KUDAYŪ: You're right. Lord Moronao need not take such precautions any more.

BANNAI: Look here—he's forgotten his sword!

KUDAYŪ: Yes, that really proves what a nitwit he's become.

Let's examine this symbol of his samurai spirit. Why, it's rusty as a red sardine!

BANNAI: Ha, ha, ha!

KUDAYŪ: This certainly shows us his true nature. Your master can set his mind at rest. (*Calls.*) Where are my servants?

I'm leaving. Bring my palanquin!

NARRATOR: With a shout they bring it forth.

KUDAYŪ: Now, Bannai, please get in.

BANNAI: No, sir, you're older than I. After you, please.

KUDAYŪ: In that case, by your leave.

NARRATOR: He gets in.

BANNAI: By the way, Kudayū, I hear that Kampei's wife is working in this place. Have you run into her here?

NARRATOR: Surprised not to receive a reply, he lifts the bamboo blinds of the palanquin and sees inside a fair-sized stone.

BANNAI: Good heavens! Kudayū has turned into a stone, like Lady Sayo of Matsuura! <sup>43</sup>

<sup>43</sup> A famous legend, found as early as the *Manyōshū*, tells of this lady

NARRATOR: He looks around him. A voice calls from under the veranda.

KUDAYŪ: Here I am, Bannai. I've played a trick and slipped out of the palanquin. I'm worried about the letter Rikiya brought a while ago. I'll watch what happens and let you know later on. Follow along beside the palanquin. Act as if we were leaving together.

BANNAI: I will.

NARRATOR: He nods in agreement and slowly walks beside the palanquin, pretending someone is inside.

Meanwhile, Kampei's wife Okaru is recovering in her upstairs room from intoxication; familiar now with the Quarter, she lets the blowing breezes dispel her sadness.

YURANOSUKE (*to women in back room*): I'll be back in a moment. Yuranosuke's supposed to be a samurai, but he's forgotten his precious sword. I'll go and fetch it. In the meantime, straighten the kakemono and put some charcoal on the stove.—Oh, I must be careful not to step on that samisen and break it. Well, that's a surprise! It looks as if Kudayū's gone. (*Sings.*)

He hears a tearful voice that cries,

"Father! Mother!" and to his surprise,

The words came from a parrot's beak:

His wife had taught the bird to speak!

NARRATOR: Yuranosuke looks around the room; then, standing under the light of a lantern hanging from the eaves, he reads the long letter from Lady Kaoyo describing in detail the enemy's situation. The letter is in woman's language, full of polite phrases, and not easy to follow.

who waved her scarf at the ship carrying her husband to Korea. She waved so long she finally turned to stone. The name Matsuura is sometimes also read Matura.

Okaru, envious of other people happily in love, tries to read the letter from upstairs, but it is dark and the letter far away and the writing indistinct. It occurs to her that by holding out her mirror to reflect the writing she can read the message. Under the veranda, by the light of the moon, Kudayū reads the letter as it unrolls and hangs, but Yuranosuke, being no god, is unaware of this. Okaru's hair ornament suddenly comes loose and falls. Yuranosuke looks up at the sound and hides the letter behind him. Kudayū, under the veranda, is still in smiles; Okaru in the upstairs room hides her mirror.

OKARU: Is that you, Yura?

YURANOSUKE: Oh, it's you, Okaru. What are you doing there?

OKARU: You got me completely drunk. It was so painful I've been cooling myself in the breeze, trying to sober up.

YURANOSUKE: You're lucky to have such a good breeze. But Okaru, there's a little matter I'd like to discuss with you. I can't talk from here, across the rooftops, like the two stars across the Milky Way—won't you come down here for a moment?

OKARU: Is this matter you'd like to discuss some favor you want to ask me?

YURANOSUKE: Yes, something like that.

OKARU: I'll go around and come down.

YURANOSUKE: No, if you go by the staircase some maid is sure to catch you and make you drink.

OKARU: What shall I do, then?

YURANOSUKE: Look—luckily there's a nine-runged ladder lying here. You can use it to come down.

NARRATOR: He leans the ladder against the eaves of the lower floor.

OKARU: What a funny ladder! Oh, I'm afraid! It feels dangerous somehow.

YURANOSUKE: Don't worry. You're way past the age for feeling afraid or in danger. You could come down three rungs at a time and still not open any new wounds.

OKARU: Don't be silly. I'm afraid. It feels like I'm on a boat.

YURANOSUKE: Of course it does. I can see your little boat god from here.

OKARU: Ohh—you mustn't peep!

YURANOSUKE: I'm admiring the autumn moon over Lake T'ung-t'ing.

OKARU: I won't come down if you're going to act that way.

YURANOSUKE: If you won't come down, I'll knock you up.

OKARU: There you go again with your awful language.

YURANOSUKE: You make such a fuss anybody would think you were a virgin. I'll take you from behind.

NARRATOR: He catches her in his arms from behind and sets her on the ground.

YURANOSUKE: Tell me, did you see anything?

OKARU: No, no, I didn't.

YURANOSUKE: I'm sure you did.

OKARU: It looked like a letter from a girl friend.

YURANOSUKE: Did you read the whole thing from up there?

OKARU: Why are you grilling me so?

YURANOSUKE: It's a matter of life and death.

OKARU: What in the world are you talking about?

YURANOSUKE: I mean—I know it's an old story, Okaru, but I've fallen for you. Will you be my wife?

OKARU: Now stop it! You're lying to me.

YURANOSUKE: The truth may have started as a lie, but if I didn't really mean it, I couldn't go through with it. Say yes, please.

OKARU: No, I won't.

YURANOSUKE: But why?

OKARU: Because what you say is not truth that started as a lie, but a lie that started as truth.

YURANOSUKE: Okaru, I'll redeem your contract.

OKARU: Will you?

YURANOSUKE: I'll prove to you I'm not lying. I'll buy out your contract tonight.

OKARU: No, I have a—

YURANOSUKE: If you have a lover, you can live with him.

OKARU: Do you really mean it?

YURANOSUKE: I swear, by the providence that made me a samurai. As long as I can keep you for three days, you are at liberty to do what you please afterwards.

OKARU: I'm sure you just want me to say how happy I am before you laugh at me.

YURANOSUKE: Absolutely not. I'll give the master the money at once and settle things here and now. You wait here and don't worry about anything.

OKARU: Then I'll wait for you. I promise.

YURANOSUKE: Don't move from the spot until I get back from paying the money. You're my wife now.

OKARU: And for just three days.

YURANOSUKE: Yes, I've agreed.

OKARU: I'm most grateful.

NARRATOR (*sings*):

If ever woman was born

Unlucky, I'm the one.

How many pangs I've suffered

For the man I love, alas.

I cry alone with muffled notes

Like a plover of the night.

Okaru, hearing this song from the back room, is sunk in thought as she feels how closely its words fit herself. At that moment Heiemon suddenly appears.

HEIEMON: Okaru—is that you?

OKARU: Heiemon! How shaming to meet you here!

NARRATOR: She hides her face.

HEIEMON: There's nothing to feel ashamed about. I stopped to see Mother on my way back from the East and she told me everything. It was noble of you to have sold yourself for your husband and our master. I'm proud of you.

OKARU: I am happy if you can think so kindly of me. But I have good news for you. Tonight, most unexpectedly, my contract is to be redeemed.

HEIEMON: No news could please me more. Whom have we to thank for this?

OKARU: Someone you know, Ōboshi Yuranosuke.

HEIEMON: What did you say? Your contract is to be redeemed by Ōboshi Yuranosuke? Have you been intimate with him for a long time?

OKARU: How could I have been? I've occasionally, perhaps two or three times, drunk with him. He said that if I had a husband I could stay with him, and if I wanted to be free he would let me go. It's almost too good to be true.

HEIEMON: You mean, he doesn't know you're married to Hayano Kampci?

OKARU: No, he doesn't. How could I tell him, when my being here is a disgrace to my parents and my husband?

HEIEMON: It would seem, then, he's a libertine at heart.

Obviously he has no intention of avenging our master.

OKARU: No, that's not so. He has, I know it. I can't say it aloud, but I'll whisper it. (*Whispers.*)

HEIEMON: Then you definitely saw what the letter said?

OKARU: I read every word. Then we happened to look each other in the face and he began to flirt with me. Finally he talked about redeeming me.

HEIEMON: This was after you read the whole letter?

OKARU: Yes.

HEIEMON: I understand everything, then. My sister, you're doomed. You can't escape. Let me take your life.

NARRATOR: He draws his sword and slashes at her, but she jumps nimbly aside.

OKARU: What is it, Heiemon? What have I done wrong? You're not free to kill me as you please. I have my husband Kampei and both my parents too. I've been looking forward so much to seeing my parents and my husband as soon as my contract is redeemed. Whatever my offense may be, I apologize. Please forgive me, pardon me.

NARRATOR: She clasps her hands in supplication. Heiemon flings down his naked sword and gives way to bitter tears.

HEIEMON: My poor dear sister. I see you know nothing of what happened. Our father, Yoichibei, was stabbed to death by a stranger on the night of the twenty-ninth of the sixth month.

OKARU: It's not possible!

HEIEMON: You haven't heard the worst. You say you want to join Kampei as soon as you're redeemed. But he committed *seppuku* and is dead.

OKARU: Oh, no! Is it true? Tell me!

NARRATOR: She clutches him and, with a cry, collapses in tears.

HEIEMON: I understand. No wonder you cry. But it would make too long a story to tell you everything. I feel sorriest for Mother. Every time she mentions what happened she weeps, every time she remembers she weeps again. She

begged me not to tell you, saying you'd cry yourself to death if you knew. I made up my mind not to tell you, but you can't escape death now. Yuranosuke is singlemindedly, fanatically motivated by loyalty. He'd have had no reason to ransom you if he didn't know you were Kampei's wife. Certainly it wasn't because he's infatuated with you. The letter you saw was of the greatest importance. He will redeem your contract only to kill you. I'm sure that's what he has in mind. Even if you tell no one about the letter, the walls have ears, and any word of the plan leaking from somebody else is sure to be blamed on you. You were wrong to have peeped into a secret letter, and you must be killed for it. Rather than let you die at a stranger's hands, I will kill you with my own hands. I can't allow any woman with knowledge of the great secret to escape, even if she's my own sister. On the strength of having killed a person dangerous to our plot I shall ask to join the league and go with the others. The sad thing about being of the lower ranks is that unless you prove to the other samurai your spirit is better than theirs, they won't let you join them. Show you understand by giving me your life. Die for my sake, sister.

NARRATOR: Okaru sobs again and again as she listens to her brother's carefully reasoned words.

OKARU: I kept thinking all the while that the reason why he didn't write me was that he'd used the money I raised as the price of my body and started on his journey. I was resentful because he hadn't even come to say good-by. It's a dreadful thing for me to say, but though Father met a horrible death he was, after all, an old man. But how sad and humiliating it must have been for Kampei to die when he was hardly thirty! I'm sure he must have wanted

to see me. Why didn't anyone take me to him? What a terrible fate never even to have abstained from animal food in mourning for my husband and father. What reason have I to go on living? But if I died at your hands I'm sure Mother would hate you for it. I'll kill myself. After I'm dead, if my head or my body can bring you credit, please use it for that purpose. Now I must say farewell to you, my brother.

NARRATOR: She takes up the sword.

YURANOSUKE: Stop! Wait a moment!

NARRATOR: Yuranosuke restrains her. Heiemon jumps in astonishment. Okaru cries out.

OKARU: Let me go! Let me die!

NARRATOR: Yuranosuke holds her back and she struggles, impatient for death.

YURANOSUKE: You are an admirable brother and sister. All my doubts have been resolved. Heiemon, you may join us on our eastward journey. You, Okaru, must live on so you can offer prayers for the future repose of his soul.

OKARU: I'll pray for him by going with him to the after-world.

NARRATOR: Yuranosuke holds firmly the sword he has twisted from her grasp.

YURANOSUKE: We admitted your husband Kampei to our league, but he was never able to kill a single enemy. What excuse will he be able to offer our master when he meets him in the afterworld? This may serve as his apology!

NARRATOR: He drives the sword hard between the mats. Underneath the floor Kudayū, his shoulder run through, writhes in agony.

YURANOSUKE: Drag him out!

NARRATOR: Even before the command leaves Yuranosuke's

mouth, Heiemon leaps from the veranda and resolutely drags out Kudayū, dripping with blood.

HEIEMON: Kudayū! It serves you right!

NARRATOR: He hauls him up and throws him before Yuranosuke, who grabs Kudayū by the topknot, not letting him rise, and pulls him over.

YURANOSUKE: The worm that feeds on the lion's body—that's you! You received a large stipend from our master and benefited by innumerable other kindnesses, and yet you became a spy for his enemy Moronao and secretly informed him of everything, true and false alike. The forty and more of us have left our parents and separated from our children, and have even forced our wives, who should have been our lifelong companions, to work as prostitutes, all out of the desire to avenge our late master. As soon as we wake up in the morning, then all through the day, we think about how he committed *seppuku*, and the remembrances arouse tears of impotent rage. We have racked ourselves with pain, mind and body. Tonight especially, the night before our master's anniversary, I spoke vile words of every sort, but in my heart I was practicing the most profound abstention. How dared you thrust fish before my face? What anguish I felt in my heart, not being able to accept or refuse. And how do you think I felt on the night before the anniversary of a master whose family my family has served for three generations, when the fish passed my throat? My whole body seemed to crumble to pieces all at once, and my bones felt as though they were breaking. Ahh—you fiend, you diabolical monster!

NARRATOR: He rubs and twists Kudayū's body into the ground, then breaks into tears of despair.

YURANOSUKE: Heiemon, I forgot my rusty sword a while ago. It was a sign I was meant to torture him to death with it. Make him suffer, but don't kill him.

HEIEMON: Yes, sir.

NARRATOR: He unsheathes his sword and at once leaps and pounces on Kodayū, slashing him again and again, though the wounds are superficial. He scores Kodayū's body until no part is left unscathed.

KUDAYŪ: Heiemon, Okaru, please intercede for me!

NARRATOR: He joins his hands in entreaty. What a repulsive sight—Kodayū, who always despised Teraoka as a lowly foot soldier, and refused to favor him with so much as a glance, now prostrates himself humbly.

YURANOSUKE: If we kill him here we'll have trouble explaining it. Pretend he's drunk and take him home.

NARRATOR: He throws his cloak over Kodayū to hide the wounds. Yazama, Senzaki, and Takemori, who have been listening in secret, fling open the sliding doors.

THREE MEN: Yuranosuke, we humbly apologize.

YURANOSUKE: Heiemon—this customer has had too much to drink. Give him some watery gruel for his stomach in the Kamo River.

HEIEMON: Yes, sir.

YURANOSUKE: Go!