

# Kabuki

FIVE CLASSIC PLAYS

Translated by James R. Brandon



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*Frontispiece:* Matsumoto Koshiro as Kumagai in *Chronicle of the Battle of Ichinotani*.

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# Chronicle of the Battle of Ichinotani

## ACT I

Kuchi

### SCENE 1 ATSUMORI'S CAMP

[The striped kabuki curtain is slowly run open to clanging of battle alarm cymbals playing Tōyose, "Approach," and alternating beats of the large drum and clacks of the ki. The scene is the battle camp of the Heike forces at Suma Bay. It is night and all that can be seen is a towering palisade of sharpened logs marking outer fortifications. A heavy gate, some ten feet high and also made of sharpened logs, opens into the camp. No one is in sight. A single sharp ki clack signals the Takemoto NARRATOR and accompanying shamisen PLAYER to begin. They are offstage left, on a second level where they follow the action of the play unseen behind a bamboo blind. The Takemoto shamisen sound is thick and heavy and easily distinguishable from the lighter, brighter sound of the usual Nagauta shamisen of kabuki, in the geza offstage right.]

NARRATOR [singing in a rich, strong voice to shamisen accompaniment]:

Unbridled drinking leads to debauchery. Unrestrained indulgence in pleasure leads to its own bitter grief. Sorrowful indeed is the end of opulence. After twenty brief years of prosperity, the Taira clan has abandoned the capital to attacks of the Minamoto, establishing an encampment at Suma Bay. With the wide ocean at the front, steep Hyōdōrigoe Mountain at the rear, deep First Valley at the side, walled with high palisades made of sharp palings running to the water's edge, the camp appears impregnable. The Taira troops, over which fly banners of red, are led by young Lord Atsumori, acting in place of his father, Minister of State Tsunemori. It is the beginning of the third month. The night is dark, even the moon is hidden, as Kōjirō Naoie, the only son of the Minamoto chief, Kumagai . . .

[Drums and cymbals sound Tōyose battle alarm. Shamisen play Jindate, "Before the Camp." KOJIRO rushes onto the bananichi to loud bata-tata

*tsuke beats. He stops at the seven-three position and looks around him. The delicate white of his refined features is set off by the light blue kimono which can be seen beneath gold and indigo-colored armor. A bat is tied back with a broad gold band. He flourishes a spear and poses a mie to battari tsuke beats.]*

... a lone warrior hurrying under the light of the stars into the enemy battle camp ...

[KOJIRO moves silently up to the main gate.]

... draws a single breath and glances in all directions.

KOJIRO [in a firm but delicate voice]: Ah! Fortunately I am the first to my way here. Before the others arrive, I must cut my way in. I shall!

NARRATOR [singing]: Although he rushes in every direction, there is no crevice in the palisades. As he wonders what to do, faintly from inside, sound of court music ...

[Softly, from the geza offstage, drift the sounds of Sogaku, a gagaku melody, played by large drum, flute, bells, and small drum. KOJIRO hesitates, fixedly as the NARRATOR, accompanied by the Takemoto shamisen, continues.]

Now, when even the mountain wind ceases and the sea waves become melancholy sounds of music stir us deeply. Unconsciously, Kojiro strains heart and ears to hear ...

KOJIRO [sadly, looking front, as court music continues]: The tale my parents told me, that aristocrats of the capital are refined and sensitive, is, I now see, true. In the midst of this world's strife not the sound of clashing weapons but tasteful playing of strings and flute and the singing of poetry mark time's passing. Surely, I am heartless, country-born, a dead I treat these exalted people as our enemies and raise the sword of bloodshed against them—how wretched it is!

[He lets his spear drop to the ground. His head falls and he poses.]

NARRATOR [singing to shamisen accompaniment]: Saying "how wretched it is," young Kojiro's heart is touched, and unconsciously the tears fall. Suddenly, the sound of running from behind! The warrior Hirayama rushes forward lance in hand!

[Loud bata-bata tsuke beats break KOJIRO's reverie. Cymbals, large drum, and gong play Toyose. HIRAYAMA, a Genji warrior, rushes onto the bananichi. He is dressed in dark armor and breeches and carries a sword and long lance. Long hair falls about his shoulders, framing a ruddy, beaky face. He stops at seven-three and peers into the dark. Sogaku court music resumes in the background.]

HIRAYAMA [harshly]: Who are you, friend or enemy?

KOJIRO: Is it you, Sueshige?

HIRAYAMA: So the friend is you, Kojiro? [He walks onto the main stage.] It would never have entered my head that you would be here before me. Admirable, admirable! If it were any other person I would fight to lead the charge, but I was not the first to arrive and since this is your first battle, I grant you the honor of being first into the enemy camp. Don't hesitate! Slice your way in! Cut them down!

KOJIRO: No, Hirayama. Listen to the court music. Truly, the elegant ways of the palace are far removed from ours.

HIRAYAMA: You don't understand at all, young Kojiro. Listen: in ancient times Shōkatsu Kōmei, his forces surrounded and besieged by Shiba Chūtasu, having exhausted every stratagem, mounted the camp tower where he calmly burned incense and played the koto. Seeing this and suspecting a trap, Chūtasu foolishly led his troops away.<sup>1</sup> Ha! This music is the same thing! Don't let it put you off. Quickly, attack the camp and earn your fame. Or, if you are afraid, Kojiro, I will lead the attack!

KOJIRO [humiliated]: How can you say ...

HIRAYAMA [crudely laughing]: Are you a coward?

KOJIRO: Well ...

HIRAYAMA: Well ...?

BOTH [alternately, accelerating until they are speaking simultaneously]:

Well, well, well, well!

HIRAYAMA [leaning in, sneering]: Will you attack? Well! Well!

[Court music stops. HIRAYAMA gestures for KOJIRO to go. Dismayed, KOJIRO looks first at the gate then at HIRAYAMA.]

NARRATOR [singing to shamisen accompaniment]: Cleverly urged on, Kojiro Naoie cries out in a hot-blooded voice ...

KOJIRO [passionately]: I challenge the Heike enemy in their camp!

[To battari tsuke beats, KOJIRO faces the gate. He twists the spear, and faces resolutely front. He speaks in time to rhythmic music of the Takemoto shamisen.]

I am Kumagai Kojiro Naoie, only son of Kumagai Jirō Naozane, clan leader of all samurai of Musashi Province! Come face me—I am the vanguard of the Genji! Come out and fight! Come out and fight!

[KOJIRO poses with his spear held overhead.]

NARRATOR [singing to shamisen accompaniment]: His cries are answered by an uproar within the camp. Pushing open the gate, the enemy pour out.

[Drums and alarm cymbals sound Toyose. The gate swings ponderously open and ten SOLDIERS, dressed in dark blue and white uniforms, and carrying swords and spears, surround KOJIRO.]

SOLDIERS: You won't escape!

[Drums, cymbals, and alternating ban and battari tsuke beats accompany the brief battle between KOJIRO and the SOLDIERS. KOJIRO vigorously forces them against the gate and, to bata-bata tsuke beats, chases them into the camp where the fighting continues. HIRAYAMA looks through the open gate, is about to follow, then hesitates.]

NARRATOR [singing to shamisen accompaniment]: While Hirayama is wondering what to do, Kumagai Jirō Naozane, pierced to the heart with worry that his child leads the vanguard, rushes on, feet flying in the air. [During the narration, KUMAGAI moves swiftly onto the bananichi to bata-bata tsuke beats and Toyose. He is dressed in gold and orange armor

<sup>1</sup> An incident described in the Chinese historical novel *The Romance of Three Kingdoms* (San Kuo) and the basis of a well-known Peking opera, *The Rise of the Empty City*.

covered with a cape of purple, the color of the Minamoto, and wears a general's battle helmet topped with deer's antlers. He stops at seven-thirty.

KUMAGAI: Ah, Hirayama, where is Kojirō?

HIRAYAMA: He was just here asking what he should do. Do not plunge into the middle of the Heike camp single-handed, I said. Wait until the main force has come, I urged. But he's young. He slashed headlong through the gate!

KUMAGAI [thunderstruck]: Dear God, he did?

NARRATOR [sings to fast shamisen accompaniment]: A furious lion whose cub is lost . . .

[KUMAGAI rushes onstage to bata-bata tsuke beats; drum and cymbals play Tōyose. Six SOLDIERS run out of the gate and attack him. KUMAGAI snarls with fury and slashes past them into the camp. They turn and follow him in with loud cries.]

. . . he forces past the enemy into their camp. Hirayama smiles to himself as he sees this.

HIRAYAMA: Ha, ha, ha! Just as I planned, just as I planned! Father and son are rats in my trap, surely destroyed by now! [In time to rhythmic music of the Takemoto shamisen.] Damn Kumagai. I've watched him rise in G favor, but now my time has come. Without lifting a finger, the enemy does my work better than the Wind God. In their struggle for life and death in strength of father and son is such the enemy will be hard pressed. Let me fight hard. Let them die! [Music stops and HIRAYAMA speaks rapidly.] Then I will enter and defeat the Heike, rising to whatever heights of fame I could wish! Ha, ha! Ha, ha! Clever, clever!

NARRATOR [sings to shamisen accompaniment]: He is in boisterous spirit when the cries of many men are heard from inside the gate. He stands at to defend himself against opponents, but Kumagai Jirō Naokane dashes through the gate clutching his son to his side.

[To loud bata-bata tsuke beats, KUMAGAI enters supporting a figure dressed like KOJIRO, but actually ATSUMORI.]

KUMAGAI [rapidly]: Good Hirayama, my son Kojirō has been wounded. I must take him to camp for care. Remain and earn glory.

NARRATOR [singing to shamisen accompaniment]: So saying over his shoulder, he rushes away as if flying.

[During the narration, KUMAGAI moves quickly past HIRAYAMA, holding the helmet over his "son's" face, onto the bananichi. He glances back over his shoulder at HIRAYAMA and poses in a mie at seven-thirty. He battari tsuke and drum beats. Then he moves deliberately off the bananichi to accelerating bata-bata tsuke beats, drum, cymbals, and Takemoto shamisen.]

SOLDIERS [rushing out of the gate]: Yaaaaah!

[Batan and battari tsuke beats; drums and cymbals play Tōyose to accompany the fight. The SOLDIERS face HIRAYAMA with drawn swords. He slashes through them, one by one, with his spear. They re-form and attack. He forces one to the ground and poses, foot on his back, in a mie.]

midame tsugi

## SCENE 2 SUMA BAY

[Nami Oto wave pattern and Tōyose continue between scenes. STAGE ASSISTANTS place straw, rocks, and clumps of rushes and grass in front of the curtain to indicate the sea edge. Nami Oto swells and ends. Silence. The stage is empty. Takemoto shamisen begins a plaintive melody.]

NARRATOR [sings plaintively]: Yearning for the sight of Prince Atsumori, distraught upon the beach at Suma Bay . . .

[Nami Oto wave pattern is played on the large drum and Kodama, "Mountain Echo," on the small drums. The curtain at the rear of the bananichi opens and PRINCESS TAMAORI enters. Her pale face is set off by a scarlet kimono and long red trousers. Her hair hangs long down her back. She carries a spear in one hand and moving lifelessly, trails a purple cloak behind her. Her kimono is off the right shoulder, indicating her distraught state. Between phrases of narration she calls out plaintively, "Lord Atsumori," "My Prince, are you here?"]

. . . Princess Tamaori, with tear-soaked sleeves, a sharp dagger near her breast, wanders here and there in the spring breeze, beneath the hazy moon.

[She poses at seven-thirty, then moves onto the main stage calling pathetically.]

She searches about her. Suddenly, the vague form of a man appears silhouetted against the early eastern clouds. It is the warrior Hirayama, fleeing on a mountain trail that leads to Suma Bay. As he sees Princess Tamaori . . .

[HIRAYAMA rushes on from the left to fast bata-bata tsuke beats, holding a drawn sword. Music stops. Seeing the Princess, he sheathes his sword.]

HIRAYAMA [glowing]: Can it be Princess Tamaori? This is a lucky meeting! [To loud batan tsuke beats, he seizes her by the sleeve. Takemoto shamisen plays softly in the background.]

From the first, when I fell in love with you at the capital, you dazzled my eyes. I could not forget you sleeping or awake, until, unable to contain myself, I spoke to your father Tokitada, who promised you would come

parents' children  
us  
over, desires

to me in marriage. Now, praise the Gods, I have you and will make  
wife. Come.

NARRATOR [singing to shamisen accompaniment]: Though he takes  
hand, she shakes him off.

[HIRAYAMA seizes her hand and pulls. To sharp batan tsuke beats  
free herself and backs away. Takemoto shamisen music continues  
background.]

TAMAORI [innocently]: Do not speak so. Whether my father gave  
or not, I am pledged to Atsumori unto our second lifetimes. We are  
searching for each other now. Should he die, we die together. Do not  
interfere.

NARRATOR [singing to shamisen accompaniment]: Turning to go, she  
stopped.

[He crudely steps on the hem of her kimono.]

HIRAYAMA: Ha! Search for Atsumori as much as you want, look for  
the bottom of the ocean, you won't find where he's gone!

[With a laugh he turns front releasing her kimono. She faces him.]

TAMAORI [frightened]: Oh, and why?

HIRAYAMA [smiling]: Because Atsumori has just been killed by me.

TAMAORI: Ah! Atsumori killed, you say?

HIRAYAMA [unconcerned]: He is.

TAMAORI: Ahhh!

[She falls back, presses her hand to her breast, and poses. She mimes  
words of the narration.]

NARRATOR [singing quietly to shamisen accompaniment]: Delicate, the  
Princess sinks beneath her grief. Unaware of others' eyes, she raises her  
voice in tearful cries and falls prostrate upon the ground.

[Head down, she weeps. Suddenly she takes out the small dagger and

TAMAORI: Prepare yourself, enemy of my husband!

NARRATOR [rapidly to shamisen accompaniment]: Saying "enemy of my  
husband," and slashing out, her wrist is seized.

[She tries to cut HIRAYAMA, striking left and right to batan tsuke beats  
but he easily avoids her weak movements, then seizes her wrist with his  
left hand puts his right on the hilt of his sword threateningly. Takemoto  
shamisen music continues in the background.]

HIRAYAMA [bawdy]: You! Do you try to oppose me? I should show no  
mercy! [Laughs.] My, the softness of your hand is just what I expected.  
You misunderstand me, after all. Change your affections completely, and  
I will cherish you as my wife. Well, Princess? Will you have me?

Will you?

[He presses her hand to his cheek, then, moving behind her, tries to press  
his cheek against hers.]

NARRATOR [singing to plaintive shamisen accompaniment]: Honeyed  
"will you, will you," draw tears of anger.

TAMAORI [breaks away and kneels]: Ah! To speak of yielding myself to  
detestable samurai, who in normal times would not even dare approach  
revolving. You are loathsome to me!

States  
difference

NARRATOR [singing to fast shamisen accompaniment]: Again she slashes; he  
seizes and holds her fast.

[She rises and slashes to batan tsuke beats. He easily seizes her wrist and  
holds her helpless.]

HIRAYAMA [matter-of-factly]: So. Will you become my wife?

TAMAORI: Well . . . ?

HIRAYAMA: Do you hate me?

TAMAORI: Well . . . ?

BOTH [alternately faster until they speak simultaneously]: Well, well, well,  
well!

HIRAYAMA: Say you hate me and I'll kill you. Well? Well?

[Coldly he throws her to the ground, unsheaths his sword, and poses, back  
to the audience, beats together, and sword upraised, in a soku mie to  
battari tsuke beats. Takemoto shamisen plays plaintively in the back-  
ground.]

TAMAORI [weeping]: Kill me, if you are such a beast. Oh, is there no one  
who will slay this person for me?

NARRATOR [singing to plaintive shamisen accompaniment]: She is piteous  
in her agony, strong-willed Hirayama's anger wells up.

HIRAYAMA [faces her, furiously]: Agh, hateful bitch! On top of rejecting  
me, you spew out insults! It would be intolerable to let you live, watching  
you bloom for another man. You'll see what my vengeance is for being  
cruelly tormented!

[Nami Oto wae pattern ominously swells. In desperation she rises and  
slashes to batan tsuke beats.]

NARRATOR [singing to shamisen accompaniment]: As the raised sword is  
plunged through her breast . . .

[With a single stroke he drives the sword into her body. She gasps and  
staggers.]

. . . a single gasp of agony! From the rear battle cries!

[Shouts mingle with alarm sounds of the large drum and cymbals playing  
Tōyose. Panic-stricken, he throws the Princess into rushes at the side of  
the stage and runs onto the banamichi to loud bata-bata tsuke beats. He  
holds the naked blade in front of him and poses in a strong mie to battari  
tsuke beats.]

Without a backward glance he runs away.

[To accelerating drum and tsuke beats HIRAYAMA rushes off. A STAGE  
ASSISTANT, dressed in black, unobtrusively removes TAMAORI's dropped  
spear and dagger. Nami Oto wae pattern swells. A sharp ki clack. The  
wae curtain falls and is whisked away by STAGE ASSISTANTS revealing  
Suma Bay framed by towering cliffs on either side. Small pine trees, rocks,  
and clumps of grass edge the water. The deep blue ocean extends as far  
as the eye can see. The stage is empty. Nō drums and flute from the geza  
off right play Issai, "One Voice," as the CHORUS sings, in austere nō  
style, a passage from the nō play "Atsumori."]

CHORUS [off right, accompanied by nō drums and flute]: "In the meantime,  
waka massed Heiki warriors, from the Emperor down, rushed to the waters' edge

in time to board ships, the Emperor's among them, before they stood out to sea."

**NARRATOR** [*sings to Nami Oto wave pattern and shamisen accompaniment*]: The enemy have slipped away by road, and Prince Atsumori hurries to inform his father Tsunemori, aboard the Emperor's ship.

[*During the narration, "ATSUMORI" moves elegantly onto the hanamichi astride his horse. To Takemoto shamisen, no drums playing Kakeri, "Hurried Entry," and Nami Oto wave pattern ATSUMORI circles the stage looking for his father. The horse, played by two actors, delights the audience by prancing and pawing the earth. A flotilla of ships appears on the horizon. ATSUMORI spurs his horse into the water, and the horse, neck outstretched as if swimming, carries its rider through the "ocean" toward the Emperor's ship and out of sight. ATSUMORI, now played by a child actor on a toy horse, reenters swimming toward the boats, giving the impression of being far out to sea.*]

**NARRATOR** [*singing as the music continues*]: And as he does, from the rear, Kumagai Jirō Naozane . . .

**KUMAGAI** [*offstage at the rear of the hanamichi*]: Wait! Wait!! [*Furious bata-bata tsuke beats. KUMAGAI rides a black horse onto the hanamichi as no drums play Tsukkake, "Speedily," and cymbals and large drum play Tōyose.*]

**NARRATOR** . . . shouting loudly and whipping his horse, enters pursuing! **KUMAGAI** [*at seven-three*]: Do I see before my eyes an exalted general of the Taira? Do you show your heels to an opponent? Come back! I challenge you! Meet Kumagai Jirō Naozane, leader of the samurai of Musashi!

Come back! Come, come! [*Roaring*]. Fight me! Fight!!

**NARRATOR** [*singing to shamisen, drums, and cymbals*]: Raising his fan and opening it, he calls, "wait for me, wait."

[**KUMAGAI** beckons to **ATSUMORI** with his fan, painted gold with a rising sun emblem in the center. Tsuke, drums playing Daishō, "Large and Small Drum," cymbals, and Takemoto shamisen crescendo. **KUMAGAI** whips his horse across the stage and into the ocean in pursuit of **ATSUMORI**. He passes **ATSUMORI** and disappears from view.]

**NARRATOR** [*slowly singing to shamisen accompaniment*]: Is not hearing an opponent's challenge reason to pause? Atsumori reins in his horse . . .

[**ATSUMORI** stops his horse and faces front.]

. . . Kumagai presses forward, together they raise their swords high . . .

[**KUMAGAI**, now also played by a boy actor on a toy horse, appears to be far out to sea, approaching **ATSUMORI**. They draw miniature swords and face each other. *Batan and battari tsuke beats punctuate the battle.*]

. . . morning sun glints like lightning on their blades, attack and turn, attack and turn, clang, clang . . .

[*Striking at each other, they charge, turn, and charge again.*]

. . . the sleeves of their armor flutter, flutter, in the wind of Suma Bay . . .

[*Without flinching they trade blows face to face.*]

. . . flocks of sea plovers, flocks of sea plovers, burst skyward, ebbing, surging, ebbing again . . .

[*They cross swords and, reflecting the narration, first one then the other seems to prevail.*]

. . . diamond for diamond, cross for cross, decision is impossible!

**KUMAGAI** [*facing front, in a child's high voice*]: Now, let us grapple! **ATSUMORI** [*facing front, in a child's high voice*]: Yes! Let us!

**NARRATOR** [*singing to shamisen accompaniment*]: Though astride their horses, they grasp each other and wrestle. Feet slide from their stirrups, and they fall between both steeds.

[*Loud Nami Oto wave pattern. They throw their swords into the sea, rein their horses side by side, reach over and grasp each others' forearms. A sharp ki clack. They pose in a mie to battari tsuke beats as a blue wave curtain drops to cover them. Stick drum and flute play lively Hayabue. As the music continues, ATSUMORI's horse, riderless, prances across the stage and down the hanamichi to bata-bata tsuke beats. A sharp ki clack. The blue wave curtain falls and is whisked away. The scene is the same. As stick drum, flute, and large drum play Odakkoiri, "Large Drum," and uchigae tsuke pattern swells, fades, then again crescendoes, ATSUMORI and KUMAGAI rise on a lift center stage, hidden by a red cloth held in front of them by two STAGE ASSISTANTS. The cloth is taken away and we see KUMAGAI holding ATSUMORI to the ground. They pose in a mie to battari tsuke beats. A ki clack: action begins.*]

**NARRATOR** [*singing to shamisen accompaniment*]: In an instant, Kumagai

seizes Atsumori and pins him to the ground. [*Music ends.*]

**KUMAGAI**: Your destiny has reached its end. Speak out your name, so its fame will increase my glory. [*Meaningfully, as he looks intently into ATSUMORI's eyes.*] Have you a final request in this life? Ask and I will not fail to fulfill it.

**NARRATOR** [*singing slowly, with great emotion, to shamisen accompaniment*]: He speaks with great courtesy . . .

[**KUMAGAI** releases **ATSUMORI**, sheathes his sword, and sits on a stump stage right. A STAGE ASSISTANT removes **ATSUMORI**'s helmet. **ATSUMORI** sits cross-legged center.]

**ATSUMORI** [*gravelly*]: You are a generous spirited and noble warrior, though an enemy. I will count it the greatest honor of my life to be killed in war by one such as you. When I left for the field of battle I abandoned thoughts of family and of self.

**NARRATOR** [*sings slowly to shamisen accompaniment*]: He has no request for this life, for he knows no existence in it.

[*Takemoto shamisen continues softly in the background.*]

**ATSUMORI**: Yet, it is difficult to forget the kindness of my father and mother. They will grieve deeply when they hear I have died in battle.

After I am slain, at least do not fail to deliver this body to my father, to assuage their grief. Know that I am . . . Minister Tsunemori's youngest son . . . Atsumori!

**NARRATOR** [*sings slowly to shamisen accompaniment*]: Pronouncing the name is an agony. Kumagai is not wood or stone, tears stream from his seeing eyes.



[KUMAGAI, until now impassive, drops his head forward, then with an effort straightens. He nods resolutely, tucks the fan into his belt, crosses to ATSUMORI, and kneels beside him.]

What does he think raising him up...

[KUMAGAI bows humbly, as to one of higher rank, and gestures for ATSUMORI to rise.]

... brushing the dust, brushing it from his armor?

[With his fan, KUMAGAI pats the dust from ATSUMORI's armor. He brushes clean ATSUMORI's helmet and sword and passes them to him.]

KUMAGAI moves a respectful distance away, kneels, and bows deeply to ATSUMORI. Music stops.]

KUMAGAI: Your noble bearing speaks witness that you are the son of Minister Tsunemori. To save one person cannot lose our victory. No one is here: make your escape. Quickly, quickly!

[KUMAGAI looks intently at ATSUMORI, points down the bananichi with his closed fan, slaps his chest with the fan, and bows deeply.]

NARRATOR [sings slowly to shamisen accompaniment]: "Quickly, quickly," he says. Gracefully, Prince Atsumori... [Music stops.]

ATSUMORI [gently]: You may help me to escape, but the Heike cannot escape destiny. Rather than be dishonored by a common soldier cutting me down at some future time, quickly, kill me yourself.

NARRATOR [sings very slowly to shamisen accompaniment]: Facing west, he clasps his hands...

[Nō drums plays melancholy Kodama, "Mountain Echo" pattern, distant thunder rolls are heard, and Takemoto shamisen plays quietly in the background. With great dignity, KUMAGAI rises and stands to the side.]

ATSUMORI sits cross-legged center and slowly removes his armor, gloves, and swords. He places his helmet on top of the armor and a short dagger directly in front of him. Silence. He folds his hands in prayer.]

... closes his eyes, and waits.

[ATSUMORI closes his eyes and bows his head expectantly. KUMAGAI stands, as if petrified. A loud chord from the Takemoto shamisen. KUMAGAI starts.]

KUMAGAI [in a choked voice]: Prepare... yourself.

NARRATOR [continuing]: Compassionately, Kumagai repeats Buddha's name in his heart, as he moves behind and lifts Buddha's sword that will sever earthly ties!

[A STAGE ASSISTANT takes KUMAGAI's fan. KUMAGAI moves behind and just to one side of ATSUMORI. He draws his long sword and raises it above his head. He draws a sharp breath, then slowly lowers the sword.]

In appearance like a precious jewel...

[Gently KUMAGAI places his hand on ATSUMORI's cheek and turns his head.]

... overwhelmed by pity and remorse his heart breaks, he hesitates...

[The sword trembles in KUMAGAI's hand. He turns away trying to gain control. Without a word, ATSUMORI closes his eyes and bows his head]

again. Suddenly KUMAGAI raises the sword as if to strike. He trembles. His face is anguished.]

... the hand that holds high the great sword weakens, his mind dissolves in tears, it is not possible to strike. Thus agonized time slips away from Kumagai...

[KUMAGAI cannot strike. He falls to his knees. Suddenly drums and cymbals sound Toyose battle alarm. To loud battari tsuke beats KUMAGAI looks down the bananichi and poses in a strong protective mite.]

... when from the opposing hill Hirayama!

[HIRAYAMA rushes onto the bananichi followed by two SOLDIERS. At seven-three he mounts a small platform which is placed on the bananichi by two STAGE ASSISTANTS. It is decorated with a pine tree and indicates a hilltop some distance away.]

HIRAYAMA [calling out]: Kumagai! You! Kumagai!! Traitor! You capture a Heike general and are about to let him go? Kill them, men, kill them both! [He poses.]

NARRATOR [chants without shamisen]: He hurls out abuse! Kumagai starts with surprise! What should he do? He stands in silence.

[KUMAGAI starts, then slowly looks down at ATSUMORI, eyes wide with shock. He lowers his eyes and stands immobile, deep in thought.]

ATSUMORI [quietly]: Ah. Will you fail, Kumagai? Do not let this chance pass and earn a coward's disgraceful name. Quickly, cut off my head and prove yourself.

[ATSUMORI looks up at KUMAGAI. HIRAYAMA sits ostentatiously on a camp stool placed beside the platform by a STAGE ASSISTANT.]

NARRATOR [singing to shamisen accompaniment]: It destroys his heart, looking with unseeing eyes into the noble face turned up to him!

KUMAGAI [deeply aware of the irony of his words]: My only son, called Kojiro, whom you match exactly in age and appearance, was wounded in this morning's battle leading the attack, so I was forced to lead him to our battle camp. [Glancing covertly at HIRAYAMA.] Deeply concerned, out of a father's love for his son, I could not help but reflect that taking your life here will cause your mother and... your father... Tsunemori... grief.

[His voice breaks. He slaps one hand on top of the other to control their trembling. He turns away from his son and begins to sob silently.]

NARRATOR [sings to shamisen accompaniment]: Brave warrior though he is... tears flow uncontrolled.

ATSUMORI [faces KUMAGAI]: Dull-witted Naozane. You would abandon companions as villains and welcome enemies as friends. Take my head quickly and pray for my soul in death. If not, I can kill myself.

[Quickly ATSUMORI takes up the dagger that has been in front of him and is about to unsheathe it. KUMAGAI rushes forward and seizes ATSUMORI's hand to stop him.]

KUMAGAI: Do not do it!

ATSUMORI: Will you disgrace yourself, coward?



KUMAGAI: But I...!

ATSUMORI [gently]: Then cut off my head. Well?

KUMAGAI: Well...?

BOTH [alternately, increasing in speed until they are speaking simultaneously, well, well, well, well, well!]

ATSUMORI [agonized voice]: Do it quickly! Decapitate me!

[ATSUMORI rises on one knee, pulls loose his hair, bites hard on it to control himself, and again sits cross-legged with his hands rigidly clasped in prayer.]

KUMAGAI [calm, resolved]: If father and son both pray for each other's salvation, in future lives surely they will dwell together on the same blossom. "Namu Amida Butsu. Namu Amida Butsu." Buddha Merciful. All Hail.

NARRATOR [sings in a bigly emotional voice to shamisen accompaniment]: His head... falls to the ground!

[KUMAGAI raises the sword high over his head and with a single stroke decapitates his son. Loud shamisen and baton tsuke beats. ATSUMORI falls backward. A STAGE ASSISTANT covers his head with a black cloth at the same time placing a property head beside the body.]

Though shameful in people's eyes...

[KUMAGAI wipes the sword in the crook of his arm, sheathes it, and slowly sinks to his knees. Afraid to look at the head of his son, he gropes blindly for it.]

... cradling the precious head in his arm...

[Finding the head, he cradles it gently.]

... he raises his voice in an anguished cry!

[Takemoto shamisen accompanies KUMAGAI's action. He rises on one knee, slowly brings the head before him, looks down at his son's face, and falls back with an anguished scream. Batan tsuke beats. He rises and falls HIRAYAMA. Takemoto shamisen continues rhythmically in the background.]

KUMAGAI: No other than Kumagai jirō Naozane has severed the head of Imperial Prince Atsumori, unmatched among the Heike clan! [Throws head forward.] Witness it!

HIRAYAMA [rises and gazes intently at the head]: I, samurai Hirayama, witness the act!

KUMAGAI [voice rising in a hoarse scream]: Victory!

HIRAYAMA: Victory!

SOLDIERS: Victory!!

[Sound of drums and cymbals playing Tōyose from the rear of the bananmichi. HIRAYAMA strides down the bananmichi and off, followed by the SOLDIERS. KUMAGAI watches him depart. In the silence he gradually relaxes. Nami Oto wave pattern begins softly, creating an atmosphere of suspense.]

NARRATOR [sings to shamisen accompaniment]: Is it unquenchable longing for her husband that rouses Princess Tamaori, lying faint on the sand?



Prince Atsumori, played by a child actor on a toy horse, appears to be at a distance in the ocean. Kumagai, pursuing on the black horse, is still in the foreground and is played by an adult actor. "Wait for me, wait. Is not hearing an opponent's challenge reason to pause?" (Atsumori. Bandō Yacht-maru, Kumagai. Matsumoto Koshirō)



"My son's enemy! Kumagai!" Hearing that Kumagai killed her son Atsumori, Lady Fuji unsheathes her dagger and strikes. He avoids her blows and forces her back. (*Sagami*: Nakamura Mannojo, *Kumagai*: Ichikawa Somegorô, *Fuji*: Nakamura Kichinosuke) Page 193

TAMAORI *[pulls herself painfully from the beach grasses toward KUMAGAI]*

TAMAORI *[weakly]*: Ah, wait, please. What cruel person has killed Prince Atsumori? At least let me see his face one final time as a remembrance.

NARRATOR *[sings to shamisen accompaniment]*: Speaking in a faint voice, deeply wounded, she approaches Kumagai, who is embracing the head.

KUMAGAI *[cautiously]*: Who asks for Prince Atsumori?

NARRATOR *[sings to shamisen accompaniment]*: "Ah, to meet him," is her dying breath.

TAMAORI *[clutching her wound]*: I am Prince Atsumori's betrothed, Princess Tamaori.

KUMAGAI *[turns, surprised]*: Is it Atsumori's bride, Princess Tamaori? TAMAORI: He is dead? Then, his head... *[She gropes blindly for KUMAGAI]* My eyes! I... can't see!

KUMAGAI *[softly]*: Cannot see?

*[He kneels beside her and passes his hand before her eyes. When she makes no response he sighs, relieved that she cannot give them away.]*

How pitiful. Here is the head... of Prince Atsumori.

NARRATOR *[sings to shamisen accompaniment]*: As it passes from hand to hand, she catches her breath and cradles it on her lap, near death with pain.

*[KUMAGAI gently places the head in her lap. Imagining the head to be ATSUMORI's she embraces it weeping. Suddenly drums and cymbals sound. Toyose alarm. KUMAGAI buries toward the bananichi to bata-bata tsuke beats and looks into the distance. Music ends.]*

TAMAORI *[faintly]*: Dearest Atsumori, it is pitiful that your life should come to this. *[She caresses the head.]* I longingly sought you everywhere since you departed for battle, when the Genji warrior Hirayama Mushadokoro seized and forced his love on me. I tried to slay him by surprise but, being a woman, as you see I was wounded. Dearest Atsumori, we two... share the same sad end... together...

NARRATOR *[sings plaintively to shamisen accompaniment]*: "At least I want to die seeing your face as we part," she thinks, but...

*[TAMAORI places the head upright on the ground before her. She loses track of it. As she gropes frantically, she gasps with pain and falls back, clutching her breast.]*

... her heart fills with the pain of her dreadful wound.

TAMAORI: I cannot even see... how inconsolable!

NARRATOR *[continuing]*: Lovingly she strokes the head, cherishing a memory of his final words in life to her, "afterward"... spoken in the evening as the flute played.

*[Shaking with pain, she cradles the head and caresses it.]*

TAMAORI *[growing weaker]*: Though our love was unfulfilled in this life, in future lives assuredly it will last eternally...

NARRATOR *[continuing]*: "I am bound to you in love, my husband," she says...

*[She holds the head in trembling hands before her face.]*

... pressing to her face, folding to her breast ...

[She presses the head to her cheek, then to her breast.]

... mind driven to distraction, uncontrolled voice rising ...

[Weeping distractedly she falls forward, to batan tsuke beats.]

... in the cries of Suma Bay's sea plovers. Sleeves dipped in an ocean's tide of tears ...

[She rises to her knees, holding the head before her face.]

... ebbing now as life's breath ebbs, seeing that the time of death has come ...

[Desperately she strains forward, gazing with sightless eyes for a final glimpse of ATSUMORI.]

... her ... life ... expires.

[She dies holding the head tightly to her breast, slowly collapsing to the ground.]

Shocked and grieving, Kumagai stands deep in thought.

KUMAGAI: How sad it is that two noble young people, like budding flowers who knew nothing of life but springtime days at court, should come to this: their bodies now lie on lonely Suma Bay, too remote for any visitor to honor their graves.

NARRATOR [sings to shamisen accompaniment]: He weeps bitter tears of grief.

[He begins to cry, then immediately checks himself and looks cautiously down the hanamichi for signs of soldiers. Nō drums play melancholy Kodama, "Mountain Echo" pattern and rolling thunder is heard in the distance. KUMAGAI kneels beside TAMAORI and to batan tsuke beats tries to take the head. She holds it tightly in death and he is forced to gently bend back each finger to release it.]

KUMAGAI [softly]: Let worldly attachments be dissolved that you may enter Buddha's Pure Land. "Namu Amida Butsu. Namu Amida Butsu."

NARRATOR [sings quietly in an extremely slow and free tempo to shamisen, Kodama drum pattern, and distant rolls of thunder]: There is no escape for it, there is none ...

[Reverently, KUMAGAI places the head on the tree stump right.]

... taking Atsumori's cape, he covers her body.

[He places her body on a raft of small logs, half-buried in the rushes stage left. He spreads over her the bright red cape which had covered ATSUMORI's armor.]

Atsumori ...

[KUMAGAI cuts a piece of cloth from his own purple cape, kneels beside the stump, spreads the cloth on the ground, places the head on it, and, after a long last look at his son, ties up the ends of the cloth. He carefully puts the wrapped head back on the stump.]

... imperial corpse placed and covered.

[KUMAGAI removes the purple cape from his armor and, with the help of a STAGE ASSISTANT, holds it in front of ATSUMORI hiding their move-

ment to the raft. The cape is spread over ATSUMORI, and the two bodies lie side by side under red and purple cloth. Instrumental music continues as KUMAGAI, profoundly depressed and moving as in a dream, finds his spear. Placing the butt against the logs, he gently pushes the raft out to sea. Watching it move away, he buries the spear in its wake. He strains to see them as long as possible. As they go out of sight, he drops his head and sobs silently. KUMAGAI's black horse enters and stands stage right. Narration resumes.]

Taking in the reins and securing them ...

[KUMAGAI crosses to the horse and picks up the trailing reins.]

... and tightly cinching the saddle ...

[He dusts off ATSUMORI's armor and places it on the saddle, where a STAGE ASSISTANT helps secure it. To instrumental music, KUMAGAI continues his melancholy pantomime. He picks up ATSUMORI's dagger and long sword. He looks at one, then the other, and sighs deeply as he thinks of his son. He passes them to a STAGE ASSISTANT, who fastens them to the saddle. KUMAGAI lifts the helmet, gazes at it a moment, and places it on the pommel.]

... cradling the head in his bow arm ...

[He takes up the head and holds it under his left arm.]

... he grasps the bridle in the other. Hearing the melancholy clomp of hoof against rock, brings to mind the sadness of that parting in the Dandoku Mountains ...

[KUMAGAI leads the horse center and brings its muzzle close to his head.] KUMAGAI: ... when Prince Shita's young groom said farewell to his master ...

NARRATOR [continuing]: ... eons ago.<sup>2</sup>

[The horse rears and paws. KUMAGAI turns his back to the audience to calm the horse.]

Amid falling tears ...

[With one arm around the horse's neck KUMAGAI sobs convulsively, though no sound is heard. He releases the bridle and turns front gazing at his son's head. His knees buckle and he sinks to the floor where he weeps unabashedly. The horse nuzzles him from behind. Drum and cymbals sound Toyose. Rising to his feet he controls his tears. He grasps the bridle firmly with one hand, cradles the precious head in the other, plants his feet wide apart, and poses in a strong mie to loud batani tsuke beats. He holds the pose as the curtain is run closed to loud Kakeri, "Rushing," played by offstage shamisen, small drums, and flute, Nami Oto wave pattern, and accelerating ki clacks. Music fades away. A sharp ki clack. Drums and flute play lively Shagiri between acts.]

2. Alluding to the sorrow of his young groom when Buddha, then Prince Shita (Siddhartha in Sanskrit), left to seek enlightenment.

## ACT II

### KUMAGAI'S CAMP

sandanme tsugi

[*Music changes to Toki no Taiko, "Time Drum," of the large drum. Ki clacks accelerate as the curtain is slowly drawn open. The scene is KUMAGAI's battle camp in First Valley, facing Suma Bay. The main room, raised and with an open veranda fronting it, faces the audience. The rear and sides of the residence are closed off by sharp palings draped with white curtains that bear the Kumagai family crest. A cherry tree in full bloom grows to the right. Beside it is an official notice board that reads, "Here stands a rare double-flowering cherry tree from the south. If a branch is cut by any person, his punishment, following the ancient case of the Maple Tree, shall be to cut off one finger for one branch cut. The second month of the third year of Juei."*<sup>3</sup> *Music ends. A single sharp ki clack signals narration to begin.*]

makura

NARRATOR [*singing to shamisen accompaniment*]: Even the heavens turn. Some day will the moon shine over Suma Bay through cleared skies? The Heike drift on waves off Yashima Island in the bay, while among the prospering Genji host, unsurpassed Kumagai has established his camp in First Valley by Suma Bay, encompassing within its impenetrable palisade of felled trees, a youthful tree in full bloom, known as Kumagai's cherry tree. Passersby, of whom some can read and some cannot, crowd about staring at the notice board which forbids the cutting of a single flower.

[*During the narration, four FARMERS enter and crowd around the notice board. They wear pantaloons, leggings, short cloaks of dark blue and brown cotton, and straw sandals. They carry boes and rakes over their shoulders.*]

FIRST FARMER: That's a fine cherry tree, isn't it? Look at the blossoms.

SECOND FARMER: Not the tree, look at the notice. The Priest Benkei wrote it they say. But I can't read one character.

THIRD FARMER: The tree is protected by General Yoshitsune. [*Puzzled.*]

"Cut off a branch of flowers, cut off a finger," it seems to say.

FOURTH FARMER [*frightened*]: That scares me. Instead of a flower, cut off a finger? Sounds like they want our heads.

FIRST FARMER [*wide-eyed*]: Just standing here I feel like I'm stepping on a tiger's tail!

SECOND FARMER: Quick as a wink . . .

THIRD FARMER: . . . before we break a branch . . .

ALL: . . . we had better leave!

[*They hurry off right to loud drum beats. The stage is empty.*]

NARRATOR [*sings to shamisen accompaniment*]: Having traveled a long distance, Kumagai's wife, Sagami, approaches . . .

[*The curtain at the rear of the bananichi opens and SAGAMI enters, wearing a gold brocaded kimono tied with black and gold sash and covered*

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*with a plain black traveling robe. At seven-three she stops and looks toward the camp. Her accompanying RETAINER and BEARER kneel behind her.*]  
 . . . immersed in thoughts of son and of husband, seeks out the palings of the battle camp, and recognizes on the white curtains their family crest.  
 SAGAMI: We are here at last. [*To the RETAINER.*] You may go ahead.  
 [*The RETAINER bows and leads the way. They stop at the gate.*]

RETAINER: Attention inside!

NARRATOR [*sings to shamisen accompaniment*]: Hearing the noisy call, Tsutsumi Gunji comes out.

[*The large blue and silver sliding doors to the inner room open and GUNJI, a family retainer, enters. He is soberly dressed in olive and gold kimono and stiff outer garments and wears a samurai's two swords.*]

GUNJI: Who approaches our master's gate? [*He is amazed to see SAGAMI.*]

My Lady, what are you doing at the battle camp?

SAGAMI: Ah, Gunji. You are looking well.

GUNJI [*bowing*]: Thank you, Madam. But first you must come in. Please enter.

SAGAMI: If I may.

[*Occasional chords of the Takemoto shamisen accompany their deliberately paced actions. GUNJI opens the gate and kneels. The RETAINER takes SAGAMI's straw hat and walking stick. SAGAMI enters followed by the BEARER, who places the small boxes he is carrying next to the veranda and helps SAGAMI remove her black traveling robe and replace it with another robe of gold brocaded silk that matches her kimono. The BEARER takes her sandals and goes out the gate. Both attendants bow.*]

SAGAMI: You may rest now.

RETAINER and BEARER: Yes, my Lady.

[*They close the gate and go off right. SAGAMI climbs the short steps to the main room and sits in the place of honor left. GUNJI kneels to the right. Bright sounding geza shamisen, offstage right, play Musubi Akata, "Bound Together," quietly in the background.*]

SAGAMI: Tell me, are my husband and son well?

GUNJI: Both are well, my Lady.

SAGAMI: Please tell my husband I am here, Gunji.

GUNJI [*bowing*]: Master has gone to the temple today, and Kojiro has not recently been seen with our lord. Are you not tired from your long journey, my Lady? Please retire and rest.

[*Music stops. SAGAMI nods assent and is about to rise.*]

NARRATOR [*sings to shamisen accompaniment*]: As they are exchanging numerous greetings, Prince Atsumori's mother, the court lady Fuji . . .  
 [*Alarm drums and cymbals sound. Lady FUJI runs onto the bananichi. She is dressed in black and pulls a straw hat low over her face. She carries a small dagger in her hand ready for use. She stops at seven-three and looks anxiously behind her.*]  
 . . . fleeing from the jaws of the tiger, hurries under falling blossoms toward the battle camp.

[To loud drums and cymbals playing Tōyose and bata-bata tsuke beats she runs under the cherry tree and leans against the gate. She poses as cherry petals fall.]

FUJI [calling urgently through the gate]: Pursuers are close behind. Please conceal me!

GUNJI [startled, answers stiffly]: This is a camp at war. You'll find no refuge here.

SAGAMI [compassionately]: Wait, Gunji. A woman understands a woman's plight. [She rises and goes to the gate. Opening it, she has one quick look at FUJI before she conceals her face.] Ah! Isn't it Lady Fuji?

FUJI [cautiously looking out]: Your voice... is it Sagami?

[They joyously recognize each other. SAGAMI kneels politely before FUJI, formerly her mistress at the imperial court.]

SAGAMI: Imagine meeting again unexpectedly...

FUJI: ... after so long. You are well I hope...

SAGAMI: ... and you? My!

FUJI: My!

TOGETHER: My, my!

SAGAMI: Please enter, my Lady.

FUJI: Forgive me. If I may.

[SAGAMI places her hands delicately before her and bows low. She gestures politely for FUJI to enter.]

NARRATOR [sings to shamisen accompaniment]: She is welcomed with an open heart.

[SAGAMI passes FUJI's straw bat and sandals to a STAGE ASSISTANT, who whisks them away. FUJI loosens her robe, goes up the steps, and sits in the place of honor left. SAGAMI kneels opposite her. GUNJI, after closing the gate, kneels behind his mistress and bows low.]

GUNJI: Clap if I can be of service, my Ladies.

NARRATOR [sings to shamisen accompaniment]: Gunji then rises and leaves.

[GUNJI bows, rises, and exits through the sliding doors center. The two women look fondly at each other. SAGAMI glances to each side to see that they are alone, then bows.]

Sagami, at last, bows...

[Offstage shamisen play dignified Goshiki, "Five Colors," in the background.]

SAGAMI [warmly]: Truly, an age has passed like a dream since the time you resided in the palace, an intimate of the Emperor, and I, infatuated with the warrior Satake Jirō, then on duty at the palace too, was forced to flee with him to the east. You could not know it, but it pleased me to hear how, after you had conceived by his Majesty, you were betrothed to Lord Tsunemori, Chief Minister of the Heike clan, and shared in the time of Heike power and prosperity. Then, when this war between Heike and Genji brought the scattering of the Heike clan, I was worried for your safety. How relieved I am to see your Ladyship's smiling face.

FUJI [smiling]: Dearest Sagami, it is good to see you well. My, my. I heard

you were carrying a child when you went away and I do not even know if you gave birth to a girl or a boy. How is the child?

[Offstage Goshiki stops.]

NARRATOR [sings to shamisen accompaniment]: Let two women meet even briefly and, happy in their tears, piled-up words tumble forth. Eyes glistening, Lady Fuji...

FUJI: Man cannot escape adversity. The son I gave birth to and raised to

become a handsome youth, dear Atsumori, has been slain in battle, while my husband, standing to sea off Yashima Island, has left me alone to face I cannot imagine what future! Can you understand my despair?

NARRATOR [continuing]: As she laments plaintively...

[The two women dab eyes with kimono sleeves.]

SAGAMI [bowing sympathetically]: No wonder you are distraught. I will consult with my husband. Out of consideration for the kindness you have shown us in the past, please entrust your welfare to us. While my husband was a member of the imperial Northern Guard he was called Satake Jirō, now his name is Kumagai Jirō Naozane. He is well known, the commander of all samurai forces in Mutsu Province.

NARRATOR [sings to shamisen accompaniment]: Hearing this, Lady Fuji...

FUJI: ...!

FUJI: The warrior you married as Satake Jirō is now Kumagai Jirō?

SAGAMI [modestly]: He is.

FUJI: This Kumagai Jirō is... your husband?

[FUJI rises on her knees wide-eyed, then slowly sinks back.]

NARRATOR [continuing]: ... calms her shocked heart.

FUJI [deceptively quiet]: Do you remember, dear Sagami, when your adultery was discovered at the palace and the Emperor decreed your imprisonment? It was I who interceded and made possible an escape with Satake Jirō through the great gate at night?

SAGAMI [warmly]: How could I forget your kindness?

FUJI: If you have not forgotten then you will return that favor by helping me slay an enemy.

SAGAMI: Kill someone? Who?

FUJI [looks at SAGAMI piercingly]: Your husband, Kumagai.

[SAGAMI recoils.]

SAGAMI: Eh? You harbor such enmity?

FUJI: I do! [She weeps.] The man who killed Prince Atsumori is... your husband Kumagai!

[FUJI falls forward weeping.]

SAGAMI: Can this be true?

FUJI: Have you not heard?

SAGAMI: I have just arrived after the long journey from the east. Now to hear your story... It is unbelievable! [Trying to mollify FUJI.] Allow me to ask my husband the truth of this when he returns.

NARRATOR [sings to shamisen accompaniment]: Struggling to speak through their tears...

SENTRY [off, at the rear of the bananichi]: Announcing Lord Kajiwara!

FUJI: Why should he come here?

SAGAMI [worried]: He must not see you. Quickly . . .

[They rise. SAGAMI urges FUJI toward the small room left. FUJI stops at the door.]

FUJI: When Kumagai returns . . .

SAGAMI: . . . I will ascertain the truth . . .

FUJI: . . . and if he is my son's slayer . . .

SAGAMI: . . . though my husband, he is your enemy.

FUJI [intensely]: Slay him without fail.

SAGAMI [weak and close to tears]: You may . . . trust me.

FUJI: Then, dear Sagami . . . !

SAGAMI: Lady Fuji . . . !

[FUJI goes into the small room left. SAGAMI closes the sliding doors and stands alone perturbed. She exits through the doors center.]

NARRATOR [sings to shamisen accompaniment]: Entering immediately,

Heiji Kagetaka seats himself in the place of honor.

[Drums play. Toki no Taiko, indicating the entrance of an evil person.

KAJIWARA strides onto the bananichi. He wears dark-colored battle dress: armor, leggings, straw sandals, and a samurai's two swords. His face is dark and cruel. Without ceremony he enters the room and sits left.

GUNJI comes through the doors center, kneels right, and bows politely.]

GUNJI: What can I do, my Lord?

KAJIWARA [rudely]: Call your Master.

GUNJI: Master Naozane resolved to offer prayers at the temple today. Be so kind as to entrust any message to me.

KAJIWARA: What? Kumagai's left camp? Agh! [Shouting off.] Hah! Soldier!

Bring in the old stonecutter!

SOLDIERS [off, at the rear of the bananichi]: Yes, my Lord!

NARRATOR [sings to shamisen accompaniment]: Saying "yes," they drag before Heiji the innocent looking stonecutter Byakugo Midaroku.

[Toki no Taiko resumes. Two SOLDIERS bring MIDAROKU, bound with ropes, down the bananichi and force him to the ground by the veranda. He is an old man. A cloth hides his white hair. He wears work clothes: grey and white striped leggings, pantaloons, and cotton kimono. Music ends.]

KAJIWARA: Well, old man, who ordered you to make a monument for

Atsumori? Since all the Heike have been driven into the western seas, a two-faced Genji samurai must be your benefactor. Confess it! I'll torture you with boiling lead, slice you down the back, rub salt in your wounds if you lie! Well, you old fool?

MIDAROKU [lightly ironic]: Your accusation is absurd. I told you, Atsumori's spirit requested the grave marker. He placed the order and vanished. I

don't care if he had no interest in buying a monument to the Five Roads to Virtue, but it's the principle of the thing, and he didn't pay me a penny, principal or interest. At least I'd have borrowed his soul fire as a night light to work by if I'd known what he was up to. Should I send a bill to the

sandanme kiri  
(kuchi)

devil? I can't shake money from a shade in hades, so, believe my story or not, the best one you'll get this side of Nirvana is: I did a favor to Atsumori's ghost. "Namu Amida Butsu, Namu Amida Butsu."

NARRATOR [sings to shamisen accompaniment]: His words are as slippery as eels.

GUNJI: You can see that talking to him is like pounding nails into rice paste. Please rest inside a while, Sir.

KAJIWARA [though furious, hides his time]: It's obvious who ordered you to carve the marker. When Kumagai returns, the three of us will have this out face to face! Take this fellow in! Gunji, lead the way!

NARRATOR [sings to shamisen accompaniment]: The old stonecutter is forcibly led away. Kajiwara is ushered into the inner room.

[Toki no Taiko music, the SOLDIERS roughly take MIDAROKU off left. GUNJI ceremoniously escorts KAJIWARA into the inner room. The stage is empty. The first section of the act is concluded, the final section, shamisen PLAYER appears on a small revolving platform to the left of the stage. They wear formal black kimono and stiff sky-blue outer garments. They bow deeply to the audience. The NARRATOR lifts the play text to his forehead in a gesture of respect. They bow again. For the remainder of the play they remain in sight.]

NARRATOR [sings, slowly and with melodramatic facial expression, to the music of his shamisen accompanist]: The sun is declining in the west when Sagami slides open the center doors to wait for her husband's late return.

[SAGAMI enters and crosses slowly to the center of the room, where she kneels looking into the distance patiently.]

SENTRY [off, at the rear of the bananichi]: The Master has returned!

NARRATOR [continuing]: Does Kumagai jirō Naozane, slayer of Atsumori in the flower of youth, understand life's impermanence?

[KUMAGAI appears on the bananichi. He wears a formal kimono of white silk, covered by rich trousers and vest made of gold brocade. A temple bell tolls. Deep in thought, head sunk on his chest, he slowly approaches the camp. SAGAMI, seeing him, claps twice. GUNJI appears and, at SAGAMI's command, opens and kneels respectfully beside the gate. SAGAMI, too, kneels and bows very low.]

Through a fierce warrior, he is capable of compassion, and returning home his heart is full.

[He pauses at seven-three and gazes at the Buddhist rosary grasped tightly in his hand. Slowly he crosses to the gate. He looks back at the notice board, then enters. GUNJI takes his sandals and closes the gate. The gate will not be used again, so it is taken away by two STAGE ASSISTANTS.]

He looks at his wife, Sagami . . .  
[Angered that SAGAMI is there, he faces front, slaps his thigh, and strides up the steps into the room, where he immediately sits.]  
. . . with stern displeasure, and goes to sit without speaking.

[SAGAMI and GUNJI kneel right, facing KUMAGAI. To distract his master, GUNJI speaks immediately.]

GUNJI [bowing]: Lord Kaijwara arrived a short time ago, wishing to discuss with you an investigation he is making of the stonecutter Midaroku, whom he has brought with him. He is waiting in the inner room, Master.

NARRATOR [sings to shamisen accompaniment]: He spins out the details.

KUMAGAI: What is he investigating, I wonder? In any case, see that he is offered sake.

[Still trying to protect his mistress, GUNJI hesitates. SAGAMI covertly gestures for him to stay.]

Serve him wine, I say. What are you waiting for? Go!

NARRATOR [sings to shamisen accompaniment]: Severely scolded, he has no choice . . .

[When GUNJI rises to leave, SAGAMI pulls on his sleeve to hold him. Frightened, he politely frees himself and goes out the center doors.]

. . . Sagami pleads with her eyes and, though Gunji leaves, his heart remains behind. Watching him go, Kumagai speaks . . .

KUMAGAI [barbly, to cover his grief]: You! Wife! What do you mean coming here? When I left home you were strictly warned not to disturb us, but you have paid no attention. You also know women are forbidden to enter a battle camp! Insolent, brazen woman!

NARRATOR [sings to shamisen accompaniment]: Before his angry display, Sagami hesitates . . .

SAGAMI [bowing politely]: Your rebuke is justified, dear Husband, but I worried about Kojiro going into his first battle until I could not sleep. So, wondering if I would only walk a mile, would I learn how he is, or if I walked five miles, would I have word from him, I found I had traveled seven miles down the road, then ten, and before I knew it one hundred miles . . . until I was in the capital. [Hoping to disarm him, she laughs decorously.] Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha! [She covers her face with her partly open fan. Still unmoved, he looks stonily ahead.] Arriving in the capital and hearing stories on every hand about the battle raging at First Valley, what parent would not be drawn to where her child was? Forgive me, I beg you. [She bows, then looks up happily.] Is Kojiro well?

NARRATOR [rapidly chants without shamisen accompaniment]: The question draws a harsh reply from Kumagai!

KUMAGAI [strongly]: Agh! When a warrior enters the battlefield he abandons life! It shows cowardly clinging to affections, to ask if Kojiro is well.

[Pause, he steals a glance.] And, if he were slain, what would you do? Well? SAGAMI [slowly, with dignity]: You misunderstand. Should Kojiro die, even in his first battle, my heart would be at ease as long as the opponent who

met and slayed him was a worthy general.

NARRATOR [sings softly to shamisen accompaniment]: Her brave words match the thought in his heart. His face softens as he speaks . . .

KUMAGAI: Listen, then: by wresting from Hirayama Mushadokoro the honor of advancing to the head of our troops, Kojiro distinguished himself. Single

handed he slashed his way into the Heike camp. Though he was slightly wounded in the struggle, he has brought eternal glory to our family.

SAGAMI [startled]: What? It was not a fatal wound?

KUMAGAI: Ah. I see regret is written on your face. [He poses strongly. His right hand rests on his closed fan. He glares at her.] Answer me! If his wound were fatal, would you grieve?

SAGAMI [with difficulty she dissimulates]: It is not that. I was moved to ask out of joy that his efforts were at least meritorious to the extent that he was slightly wounded. [She pauses and looks closely at KUMAGAI.] Were you with Kojiro then?

KUMAGAI [gesturing with the closed fan]: I was. From the time of his first danger we were together in the battle. I took him, protesting, under my arm and carried him back to camp. Later, to my incomparable glory, I took the head of their rear-guard commander, Prince Atsumori!

[KUMAGAI poses. SAGAMI falls back with a gasp.]

NARRATOR [rapidly to shamisen accompaniment]: At his words Sagami pales with shock, while behind, the Emperor's intimate listens . . .

FUJI [rushing from the room left]: My son's enemy! Kumagai!

NARRATOR [continuing]: Unsheathing her dagger, she cries "Kumagai!" He uses her scabbard . . .

[FUJI slashes at KUMAGAI several times to loud *batan tsuke* beats. He fends off the blows with the empty scabbard.]

KUMAGAI: Who calls me an enemy?

NARRATOR [continuing]: . . . pressing her to the floor. [Forcing her to the floor, he does not see her face.]

SAGAMI: Do not be hasty. She is our Lady Fuji.

KUMAGAI: What? Lady Fuji? [He lifts her up enough to recognize her. He is agast.] Truly it is Lady Fuji!

NARRATOR [continuing]: Meeting so unexpectedly, he leaps back and bows in respect.

[He takes the dagger from her hand and starts to bow to her. FUJI seizes his long sword and is about to draw. To show his sincerity he quickly removes the short sword from his sash and pushes it toward her, making himself unarmed. In time to rhythmic shamisen chords he gradually forces her back with placating gestures. He looks FUJI directly in the eye, then prostrates himself before her. For the moment she is unable to kill him, but her desire for revenge is undiminished.]

FUJI: How inhuman, Kumagai, to take the head of a mere child in combat. [She weeps loudly. Recovering, she nods to SAGAMI.] You have sworn to kill your husband.

SAGAMI: But I . . .

FUJI: Did you lie before?

SAGAMI: But . . .

FUJI: Will you help me?

SAGAMI: Well . . .

FUJI: Well?

kunige



BOTH [alternately, then faster until they are speaking in unison]: Well, well, well, well!

FUJI [band on bit of KUMAGAI's long sword]: Well? Sagami! Will you?

SAGAMI [weakly, after an anguished pause]: I . . . will!

NARRATOR [continuing]: "I will," she replies, though her breast feels paralyzed!

SAGAMI [bowing, the words scarcely audible]: My Lord Naozane. Knowing all the while Prince Atsumori is the noble seed of an Emperor, you felt obliged to slay him. There must be some reason. If there is . . .

SAGAMI and FUJI: . . . I pray . . .

NARRATOR [continuing]: They speak as if suffocating . . .

[FUJI seems ready to draw KUMAGAI's long sword, but SAGAMI gestures for her to stop. The two women look at each other. FUJI slowly sinks to the floor.]

. . . tears fall unrestrained.

[They weep bitterly and loudly.]

KUMAGAI [looking coldly ahead]: What nonsense. In this war all Heike warriors are enemies. Why should we forgive Atsumori, a Heike prince, or anyone else, when we're fighting for our very lives?

[Outraged, she is about to draw. He falls back on one hand and calms her with a gesture.]

Listen to me, Lady Fuji, what happens on the battlefield is beyond human power. Resign yourself to it. I will relate to you the tale of that day, and how Prince Atsumori died in battle.

NARRATOR [sings melodramatically, with great emotion, to shamisen accompaniment]: He settles himself and begins to narrate the tale!

[FUJI threatens to draw. He gestures for her to be calm. She sits reluctantly. He moves forward and poses on his knees, grasping the closed fan in his right hand.]

KUMAGAI [strongly]: Now then, it had come to pass that during the long night of the sixth, at the time clouds in the east were beginning to brighten, among the throng of Heike warriors who assaulted our vanguard of two—Hirayama and Kumagai—one man stood out . . .

NARRATOR [continuing]: . . . "unsurpassed in scarlet-laced armor, forcing even Hirayama to cease fighting and flee to safety on the beach!"

[KUMAGAI places the fan on the floor, gestures strongly, lifts the closed fan, strikes his chest with it, and points into the distance, miming the action described in the narration.]

KUMAGAI: What a fearless young samurai! "Come back," I shouted, "don't waste yourself on a fleeing enemy when I, Kumagai, am here!" [Calling off.] "Come back! Come back!"

NARRATOR [continuing]: Holding the fan, he motioned him to return . . . [KUMAGAI points off with the fan, flicks it open, and still on his knees poses in a mie to battari tsuke beats, the fan held against his chest.]

. . . until he turned his horse's head, and blows twice, three times, struck on the wave-struck shore.

nor:

[KUMAGAI closes the fan and, to battari tsuke beats, strikes his thigh, as if whipping a horse.]

KUMAGAI: "Let us grapple," I said, "Yes," he replied.

NARRATOR [continuing]: Casting long swords away, they crash to the earth between their horses!

[He moves the fan back and forth as if the two were grappling over it, opens it, and suddenly presses it down to the floor.]

FUJI [trembling]: Ah! Then did you hold down the young warrior?

KUMAGAI: Looking closely at his face, I saw he was some sixteen years old, the same age as my son, a court child with blackened teeth and eyebrows delicately plucked, surely still living with his parents. Thinking of their deep agony and of my own affection for a son, I lifted him to his feet.

NARRATOR [continuing, slowly]: Brushing off the dust . . .

[KUMAGAI mimes brushing the dust from his sword.]

KUMAGAI: "Quickly! Flee!"

FUJI: Did you urge him to go? Then you did not intend to slay him?

KUMAGAI: Though I urged him, "quickly, flee," "no," he replied, "once thrown to the ground by the enemy, I am dishonored. Take my head quickly . . . Kumagai!"

FUJI: What? Did he say, "take my head"? What a noble phrase!

[She collapses, weeping loudly.]

KUMAGAI [straining for control]: My Lady, please! When I heard this, all the more tears welled in my breast.

[Forcing back tears, he presses the closed fan against his chest.]

Ah, what if my son Kojiro had been thrown to the ground by the enemy and was about to lose his life in this same way. The way of the samurai is not so base! Though I seized my long sword . . .

NARRATOR [sings in loud, melodramatic tones to shamisen accompaniment]:

"I hesitated! I could not draw!"

[KUMAGAI seizes his long sword. Rising on his knees, he stamps one foot on the top step of the stairs and poses in an anguished mie to loud battari tsuke beats. In time to shamisen chords, several times he tries to draw. The NARRATOR strains forward and slaps the stand for emphasis; his face contorts as he cries out KUMAGAI's agony.]

"Then I heard! From the mountaintop behind me, routed Hirayama cried out!"

KUMAGAI [chants powerfully, in time to the rhythm of the Takemoto shamisen]: "Kumagai! You are a traitor! He is at your mercy, yet you dream of helping Atsumori," he called out to me! Ahhh!!

[With a prolonged cry, KUMAGAI falls forward. He steadies himself by leaning on the upright closed fan. Quietly, but emotionally, he continues.] "There is nothing I can do. Have you any final words? If so, speak and I will . . ."

[He breaks off and puts his hands to his eyes.]

NARRATOR [continuing]: Eyes brimming with teardrops . . .

KUMAGAI: "Father is on the rough sea; mother's welfare weighs upon my

monogatari

nor:

heart. In this unsettled world, yesterday's clear skies have clouded. My single request, Kumagai, is that you help my mother in the difficult life to come." There was nothing else to do but . . . strike off the child's head! [Screaming.] Thus I fulfilled the custom of the battlefield!

[The two women rise on their knees in horror, then sink back weeping loudly. KUMAGAI's face twists in agony, he rises on one knee, holds the open fan before his chest, and poses. He throws the closed fan to the floor in a gesture of revulsion. His chest heaves with sobs and he prostrates himself on the floor. The three weep together.]

NARRATOR [sings quickly to rapid shamisen accompaniment]: In the midst of his narrative, Lady Fuji . . .

FUJI: Had he truly loved his mother, could he not have hidden in the capital as his father urged . . .

NARRATOR [continuing]: "... instead of setting out for First Valley? Ah, how I bitterly regret that, when you bravely dressed in armor . . ."

[Rising on her knees, FUJI mimes bidding ATSUMORI farewell.]

FUJI: . . . I urged you, joyfully, to go!

NARRATOR [continuing]: "Though I was resolved, my heart bursts with anguish!"

[SAGAMI and FUJI look comfortingly at each other, then fall forward, weeping loudly and wiping their eyes. In her grief FUJI turns away.

KUMAGAI sits impassively. Spoken narration continues without shamisen accompaniment.]

Thinking, "how natural her grief," Sagami deliberately raises her lamenting voice.

SAGAMI [eloquently]: No, my dear Lady. Among all the host that fled by ship to Yashima Harbor, only one, Prince Atsumori, remained behind to earn through death greater fame than a hundred-thousand mounted warriors. Would you be happy if he quaked in hiding, the object of people's jibes and laughter? How disgraceful that would be.

NARRATOR [sings to shamisen accompaniment]: As she is admonished, Kumagai . . .

KUMAGAI [turns to SAGAMI, soberly]: Excellent, Wife. It will not do for a lady of the court to remain here. Go with Lady Fuji at once, anywhere she wishes. [He faces FUJI gravely.] Resign yourself, my Lady. I must prepare for Lord Yoshitsune's inspection of Prince Atsumori's head. Gunji, are you there? Gunji? Gunji!

[The two women bow very low. KUMAGAI replaces the short sword in the scabbard and takes the long sword in his hand. He rises and looks intently at FUJI.]

NARRATOR [continues]: Calling, he goes out of the room.

[KUMAGAI gestures to FUJI to be restrained, then strides out through the doors center which automatically open and close for him. Silence. A time bell tolls in the distance. The final section of the climax begins. SAGAMI rises and helps FUJI put on her outer robe. Plaintive, poetic narration continues.]

sandanme kiri  
(tsune)

kakekotoba

As the sunset bell tolls time's uncertain passing, the lights of the battle camp light up more and more . . .<sup>4</sup>  
[The bell tolls again. Two boy SERVANTS bring on small glowing lanterns.]

. . . the grief of stricken Lady Fuji.

[SAGAMI sheathes the small dagger and hands it respectfully to FUJI. She kneels and bows. The bell tolls.]

FUJI [sadly, to quiet Takemoto shamisen accompaniment]: When I think of him, pity overwhelms me. He carried an object next to his flesh, from which, until his death, he was never parted: this flute called Green Leaves.

[She takes out a small flute wrapped in cloth.] It proves how strong is the bond between mother and son that this flute, which Atsumori gave the stonecutter as payment to raise a marker over his grave, should mysteriously come into my hands.

[She gazes wonderingly at the flute.]

NARRATOR [slowly sings to shamisen accompaniment]: "If the soul still remains on earth, why do you not appear before me?"

FUJI: You do not hear my voice, my son. Ah! What memories are contained in this flute!

[She folds back the cloth and gazes longingly at the polished bamboo tube.] NARRATOR [continuing]: Pressing it inconsoably to her breast, she laments.

[FUJI presses the flute to first one cheek then the other. She cradles it tenderly in long kimono sleeves and holds it tightly to her breast. She sinks to the floor, weeping loudly.]

SAGAMI [drying her tears]: The flute should be a consoling memento, its notes, even more than a chanted Darani prayer, leading his soul through all obstacles to repose. Dearest mistress, let its sound be Prince Atsumori's voice.

[SAGAMI looks inquiringly at FUJI.]

NARRATOR [continuing]: In accordance with her urgings, Lady Fuji . . .

[SAGAMI looks off and claps twice. A boy SERVANT enters, listens to SAGAMI's whispered order, bows, and retires.]

Although tears flow into the holes of the flute and fingers tremble, the notes rise clear.

[Except for chords of the Takemoto shamisen, the following actions are performed in silence. Two boy SERVANTS enter from the inside room. One carries a black lacquered picher of water and matching basin, the other an incense tray. They put them down and bow. The first SERVANT pours water over FUJI's hands, then moves back respectfully. The second SERVANT passes a small white towel to SAGAMI, who in turn passes it to FUJI, who carefully dries her hands. The towel is passed back the same way. The first SERVANT now pours water on SAGAMI's hands, and the

4. "More and more" (tado) is a kakekotoba. In translation the line may be read "light up more and more" or "more and more the grief."

5. The soul remains on earth forty-nine days after death in Buddhist belief.

towel is banded to her by the second SERVANT. When the towel is returned, the first SERVANT picks up the pitcher and basin, bows very low, and swiftly carries them off. The second SERVANT slides the incense tray before SAGAMI and bows. She, in turn, very respectfully places it in front of FUJI and bows low to FUJI with her back to the audience. The second SERVANT quickly exits, and the doors center close. FUJI takes the flute from inside her kimono, unwraps it, and holds it before her reverently. Putting the flute in her lap, she places a pinch of incense on burning coals in the small bowl on the tray. She places her hands together and bows her head. Curls of smoke rise in the air. FUJI gestures to SAGAMI. SAGAMI bows, moves to FUJI, kneels, and, rising again, takes the incense tray and places it beside the sliding doors left. SAGAMI places a pinch of incense on the coals and clasps her hands in a silent prayer. Now that her hands are purified and incense offered to ATSUMORI's soul, FUJI raises the flute to her lips.]

Bound by ties of love between mother and son . . .

[Gentle notes of Tsukebue, "Flute Accompaniment," rise and fall. The shadow of a man appears on the translucent paper doors. Narration quickens.]

She catches one fleeting glimpse of a form, vague as shadows of a heat wave, cast on the sliding paper doors. "Surely it is Atsumori!"

FUJI: My child! My beloved!

NARRATOR [continuing]: Rushing forward, she is stopped and calmed by Sagami.

[FUJI rises in great agitation. SAGAMI gently but firmly stops her.]

SAGAMI: Dear Lady, please listen. The spirit of the dead may appear in the smoke of incense.<sup>6</sup> When Fujiwara Sanekata died in exile, his soul's longing for the capital was so great he returned in the form of a sparrow. While this form you see may be such a spirit, it is said the ties of parent and child last but one lifetime. If you approach, his spirit will surely vanish.

FUJI: No, no! Isn't it said souls of the dead wander on earth for forty-nine days before incarnation? At least a single word . . . !

NARRATOR [continuing]: Shaking loose, breaking loose . . . !

[FUJI shakes off SAGAMI's politely restraining hand. Three times

SAGAMI tries to prevent FUJI from reaching the doors, but in the end FUJI forces SAGAMI to the floor and rushes to the doors.]

When the sliding doors rattle open there is no figure to be seen, only a suit of scarlet-laced armor standing in its place.

[FUJI, with the help of STAGE ASSISTANTS, slides the doors open to show, not a person, but a suit of stacked armor in an otherwise empty room. Both women fall back in surprise.]

FUJI [tremulously]: Was the shadow only this?

SAGAMI [on her knees, gently]: Did you imagine this form, in the longing of your heart?

6. According to Chinese legend, the spirit of the Empress Li appeared in the smoke of incense offered in her memory.

kakekotoba

FUJI: Oh, Sagami!

SAGAMI: Dearest Lady!

NARRATOR [continuing]: Bound in yearning, unheedingly . . .

[FUJI turns to look again at the armor. SAGAMI watches her, then turns away and mimes her grief.]

. . . they cry out<sup>7</sup> their weeping lament.

[FUJI sinks to the floor. Both women wipe their eyes as they cry rhythmically in unison.]

Time slips by. Then Kumagai Jirō Naozane enters carrying the head case. Sagami pulls her husband's sleeve.

[The sliding doors center open and KUMAGAI, a deeply melancholy expression on his face, slowly enters. He carries under his left arm a round case, made of plain wood, used to contain a head taken in battle or execution. KUMAGAI wears formal court dress: a deep green kimono is covered by a stiff upper garment and long, trailing trousers of the same color with a wide gold band across the center. SAGAMI politely holds his sleeve so he cannot move.]

SAGAMI [modestly]: Dear Naozane, the life of mother and child together ends here. Allow them to take final leave of each other at least.

NARRATOR [sings dramatically to shamisen accompaniment]: Lady Fuji, still in tears . . .

FUJI [weeping]: Kumagai, have you not a child, too? Understand what is in a parent's heart. Even wild beasts grieve for their children. Have pity, allowing me one last glimpse.

NARRATOR [continuing]: Though wretchedly imploring him . . . ! [She sinks to her knees and pulls on his outer sleeve. The women flank him.]

KUMAGAI [severely]: No! Until the head has been identified, permission cannot be given to view it!

NARRATOR [continuing]: As he pulls free and moves between them, about to go . . .

[He pulls first one sleeve free, then the other, and deliberately descends the steps. Suddenly the clear, refined voice of YOSHITSUNE is heard offstage. KUMAGAI stops and looks back.]

YOSHITSUNE [off]: Kumagai! Kumagai, do not depart with Atsumori's head! Present it to Yoshitsune! I shall verify it immediately!

NARRATOR [continuing]: With the call of "I shall verify it immediately," the door flies open to reveal . . . General of the Army Yoshitsune! [No drums play. Ichō, "Single Rhythm," creating a military mood. The center doors slide open to reveal YOSHITSUNE, the Shōgun's younger brother. He wears armor threaded with gold, black leggings, and red shoes. His handsome face is powdered a delicate white. A gold and white silk cape partially covers his heavy armor.]

As one, Jirō Naozane, his wife as well, and also Lady Fuji fall prostrate.

7. In translation "cry out" may mean either "scream" or "exhaust."

Yoshitsune takes his seat . . .

[YOSHITSUNE strides to the place of honor left. He sits on a camp stool and rests his feet on a bearskin rug, both just placed there by his SAMURAI. He holds a large war fan firmly in his right hand. KUMAGAI quickly mounts the steps and kneels center stage, while SAGAMI and FUJI kneel unobtrusively in the corner of the room right. They bow flat to the floor. Four SAMURAI squat on their heels behind YOSHITSUNE keeping guard. The music stops.]

YOSHITSUNE [elegantly, yet with great inner strength]: Kumagai, to delay in presenting the head for verification and to request leave, in the midst of battle, cast doubt on your intentions. I have heard your conversation from beginning to end, concealed in the inner room. I command you: this instant produce Atsumori's head!

NARRATOR [sings slowly, dramatically, to shamisen accompaniment]: Hearing his words, Kumagai . . .

[KUMAGAI rises on one knee. He looks at YOSHITSUNE, then at the notice board right.]

. . . strongly answers, "yes" . . .

[KUMAGAI nods his head, resolved. Looking at YOSHITSUNE he says, "yes," and bows very low.]

. . . moves quickly to the young cherry tree, where there is planted . . . [He strides to the veranda by the cherry tree and, reaching out, pulls the notice board from the ground. Soft batan tsuke beats accompany the action.]

. . . a notice board, which he pulls from the ground . . .

[Very deliberately he brushes dirt from the end of the stick with paper taken from the breast of his kimono.]

. . . and places, unafraid, before Lord Yoshitsune.

[KUMAGAI places the notice board on the floor before YOSHITSUNE, kneels, and bows.]

KUMAGAI [strongly, composed]: A short time ago at Horikawa Palace, my Lord Yoshitsune made known his will to one of his vassals by means of a poem fastened to a mountain cherry. In the same way here, Priest Benkei has written on this notice board your command to take Atsumori's head. In obedience to my Lord's decree, as written here, the head has been taken. Undertake, then, its verification!

NARRATOR [ponderously singing to shamisen accompaniment]: When he lifts open the lid . . .!

[KUMAGAI begins to lift the head case lid. SAGAMI recognizes KOJIRO.] SAGAMI: Ah! That head is . . .!

NARRATOR [sings rapidly to shamisen accompaniment]: Struck by the truth, the wife rushes forward. Lady Fuji strains to see!

[With lightning speed, KUMAGAI claps the lid back over the head.

SAGAMI rushes forward, but he brushes her down the steps with the notice board. FUJI, straining to see, is prevented from approaching by KUMAGAI, who presses her back, using the notice board as a pole.]

KUMAGAI [harshly]: Stop! You may see the head after our Lord has verified it! You will be silent now! Silence!!

[The last word is drawn out in an agonized cry. They pose in a tableau. The audience applauds.]

NARRATOR [continuing, emotionally]: Kumagai's admonition . . . and pushes FUJI back with the board.]

. . . calls them to shame . . .

[He glares commandingly at SAGAMI; she slowly falls back.]

. . . wanting to approach but unable to . . .

[KUMAGAI raises the notice board over his head. FUJI, suddenly released, plunges headlong down the steps.]

. . . racked by unendurable anxiety!

[To loud battori tsuke beats they pose in a mie: KUMAGAI flicks a long trouser leg forward, plants his foot loudly on the top step, presses the notice board, upside down, against his shoulder and glares at the women, SAGAMI and FUJI, kneeling on either side of the stage, face KUMAGAI, hold up a hand to protect themselves, then fall forward, sobbing bitterly. The audience applauds the mie. YOSHITSUNE makes no sign that he is aware of what is happening.]

Circumspectly, Kumagai jirō Naokane proceeds.

KUMAGAI [gripping the board emotionally]: Prince Atsumori is the Emperor's offspring, residing in the Emperor's Southern Palace. [Glances significantly at the notice board.] "Rare double-flowering cherry tree from the south: if any person strikes off the flower of one branch, he must strike off the flower of the other."<sup>8</sup> Inferring what your intentions might be, I have struck off his head to correspond with the flower of your command!

[His words are a strangled scream. His body trembles violently.] Has my Lord's will been fulfilled? Or has Kumagai misunderstood? Pronounce judgment!

NARRATOR: He cries out!

[The NARRATOR's voice quivers with emotion, his face contorts, his eyes start, he rises on his knees and with shaking hands grips the ends of his vest to keep control of himself. KUMAGAI throws down the notice board, and KOJIRO before YOSHITSUNE. The NARRATOR's voice becomes husky.]

8. Kumagai's interpretation of the order contains several involved puns. The word for bud, *fuaba*, is written with the character meaning "youth," but audiences would be reminded of the more common way of writing *fuaba*, with characters meaning "two" and "leaf," referring to the double leaf that accompanies a budding flower, thus suggesting Atsumori and Kojiro, who are budding or flowering youths of the same age. Being the Emperor's son, Atsumori is "rare" or precious; it is "rare" or fortunate that Kojiro, so like Atsumori, would be available for substitution; and a double-flowering cherry tree itself is a rarity. The order (*tsubi o kiraba, tsubi o kiru bashi*), previously read "if you cut one branch, you must cut one branch [or finger]," here is read "if you cut one child, you must cut one child," for "one branch" and "one child" are written with characters having the same pronunciation (*tsubi*).

Yoshitsune smiles and initiates the inspection.

[YOSHITSUNE opens his fan in a languid movement, holds it before his face, turns toward the head, then slowly lowers the fan. KUMAGAI looks intently into YOSHITSUNE's eyes trying to read his lord's expression. YOSHITSUNE nods slightly as he recognizes KOJIRŌ. He continues to gaze at the pale face of the dead boy as he speaks delicately, yet deeply moved.]

YOSHITSUNE: Ahh. You have read Yoshitsune's heart to spare the flower.

The head is well taken. [He pauses.] Now, let those present who are related pay final honor to this head which unmistakably . . . is Atsumori.

[YOSHITSUNE lowers and closes the fan.]

NARRATOR [sings slowly, emotionally, to shamisen accompaniment]: After hearing these words . . .

[KUMAGAI bows and moves, on his knees, to the veranda.]

KUMAGAI [scarcely audible]: Here, Wife. [He places the head before her on the veranda.] Show Prince Atsumori's head to Lady Fuji.

[He looks warningly at her. She slowly raises her eyes to meet his. A look of understanding passes between them. He retires upstage.]

SAGAMI [bowing]: Yes.

NARRATOR [sings plaintively, melodically, to shamisen accompaniment]:

Saying no more than "yes," the wife . . .

[SAGAMI rises, anguished, unable to look at the head of her son. She grips the lapels of her heavy outer robe and sinks to her knees weeping.]

. . . lifts the pitiful head in her hands . . .

[Struggling against her emotions, she rises and crosses to the head. At last she turns and looks, but cannot bring herself yet to touch it. She takes folded paper from her breast, bites down hard on it to gain control of herself, turns away, and stands in a grief-stricken pose, head rhythmically bobbing up and down like a puppet to express her conflicting emotions. The audience applauds.]

. . . with brimming eyes she gazes upon the changed face of her dead son. . . . [She lifts the head from the floor and cradles it in the crook of her arm. In time to the music she walks forward carefully, one step at a time.]

. . . her breast, choked with bitter grief, her body quaking . . .

[She staggers, catches herself, then sinks to the floor. Holding the head out at arm's length, at last she gazes at it, lovingly, as she rocks from side to side. Her head bobs in grief and she weeps bitterly.]

. . . ah! . . . the head in her trembling hands . . .

[Taking the paper from between her teeth, she cradles the head in the crook of her arm and wipes KOJIRŌ's face. She puts the paper away. Holding the head directly before her in both hands, she rises on her knees and looks longingly into KOJIRŌ's face. Her hands and body tremble, the head moves rhythmically up and down.]

. . . seems to be nodding . . .

[SAGAMI and NARRATOR cry in unison.]

SAGAMI: . . . as he did, when turning back at the gate, he smiled upon me!

When I recall his features . . .

[She clutches the head to her breast and presses her cheek against KOJIRŌ's.]

NARRATOR [continuing, emotionally]: . . . how tragic . . .

SAGAMI: . . . how pathetic!

NARRATOR: Her voice stops in her throat!

[Her body is wracked with sobbing so violent no sound can escape. Then gradually her despairing cries alternate with those of the NARRATOR until they are loudly weeping in unison to shamisen accompaniment.]

SAGAMI [tearfully]: Dear Lady Fuji. Look. Lamented Prince Atsumori's head!

[Putting a piece of clean paper beneath it, SAGAMI places the head on the floor facing FUJI. FUJI, still kneeling with her back to the audience, slowly looks over her shoulder. Seeing the head of KOJIRŌ, she turns to SAGAMI in wonder.]

FUJI: What? That head is . . . ?

SAGAMI [crying out]: Yes, it is!

[To Takemoto shamisen accompaniment, SAGAMI quickly covers the head with the trailing end of her robe, as if to protect it, and cries anew. She looks meaningfully at FUJI and partially uncovers the head.]

Look carefully upon this head. May it dispell your rancor. You should, indeed, pay homage . . . pay homage to it!

[Covering the head again, she cries softly in time to the rhythm of the Takemoto shamisen.]

Ahh, this head . . . at the time I was secretly pregnant by Kumagai at the palace, and forced to flee to the east to give birth . . . this head . . . you, too, gave birth to a child who became . . . Prince Atsumori! Together we carried a child in our wombs when parted from our homes.

NARRATOR [continuing pathetically]: That, after sixteen years of separation, a maid in waiting could be of service to her lady . . .

[SAGAMI looks down at the head under the robe. She waves her hands in the air distractedly.]

. . . surely is an act of Karma!

[SAGAMI falls forward over the head. She and the NARRATOR cry in unison.]

SAGAMI [frantically]: At least, in death were his . . .

NARRATOR [continuing]: . . . "last moments brave?" she asks in tormented fear.

[She lifts the robe to peer at her son's face, then drops the robe with an agonized expression on her face. Tearfully she bugs the head in the robe to her breast.]

The husband does not even blink before his lord, though tears stream from his eyes . . .

[KUMAGAI grips his fan tightly, his lips tremble, but he does not speak. SAGAMI carries the head to the veranda and gently replaces it on the base of its carrying case.]

Were he to speak a word of consolation, he would choke on tears, he would spit blood!

[SAGAMI falls to the floor, leans back first on one hand, then on the other. Suddenly she rises and runs to embrace KOJIRO's head once more, but KUMAGAI firmly gestures for her to go back. She collapses on the floor weeping.]

Lady Fuji, in tremulous voice . . .

FUJI: Ah, dear Sagami, it had not crossed my mind until now that Kumagai had compassionately sacrificed your son for mine. With what words can I thank you? As to how he could play his flute and show his shadow on the doors—now I understand.

[She faces YOSHITSUNE and bows deeply, indicating she knows he arranged these events. Suddenly battle alarms—a conch shell and drums and cymbals playing Tōyose—sound offstage.]

NARRATOR [rapidly]: Carried by the wind, the conch shell's battle cry clamorously pierces the ear! Roused by its sound, Yoshitsune . . .

YOSHITSUNE [briskly]: Kumagai. The conch shell sounds assembly. Prepare yourself. Prepare for battle!

NARRATOR [sings rapidly to shamisen accompaniment and swelling battle alarm]: Obedient to his words, Kumagai hurries from the room.

[KUMAGAI bows, picks up his long sword, and goes into the center room. One of the SAMURAI puts the cover on the head, and moves the case to one side.]

Kajiwara Heiji, who has been listening all the while, bounds from the garden gate!

[KAJIWARA lopes on from the garden left, sneering and shaking his fan at YOSHITSUNE. Music stops.]

KAJIWARA: I heard you, I heard you! [Laughs harshly.] I expected something like this, so on the excuse of investigating the stonecutter, I've done some spying! [He runs to the banamichi.] The Kamakura Shōgunate will be pleased to hear that Yoshitsune and Kumagai want to save Atsumori! Ha, ha! Just wait!

NARRATOR [continuing, at a furious tempo]: He shouts over his shoulder as he rushes off, when, from behind, a stonemason's steel chisel pierces his back as cleanly as a dagger's blow!

[KAJIWARA runs down the banamichi to rapid and loud bata-bata tsuke beats. As he goes out of sight, sharp bata tsuke beats and a cry of pain are heard.]

With a single cry, breath and life expire! As the General is thinking, "Who has done this," the old stonecutter enters.

[MIDAROKU, holding a stone chisel in his hand, runs on from the left, looking anxiously down the banamichi. Seeing YOSHITSUNE, he assumes a pose of innocent old age.]

MIDAROKU: Well, well. A piece of worthless trash blocking your way has been removed and a recent conversation has set my mind at ease. I will take my leave.

NARRATOR [continuing]: . . . he says, turning to go.

[To Takemoto shamisen accompaniment MIDAROKU crosses toward the banamichi.]

YOSHITSUNE [elegantly]: Wait, old man.

MIDAROKU [kneels cautiously]: What is it you wish, my Lord?

YOSHITSUNE: Identify yourself.

MIDAROKU: I have nothing to conceal. I am an old stonecutter. Byakugo Midaroku from Mikage Village.

YOSHITSUNE: Then stand. You may go.

[Relieved, MIDAROKU bows and crosses onto the banamichi with small, slow steps of an elderly person. As he reaches seven-three YOSHITSUNE suddenly glares at him.]

Munekiyo, wait! Yabeyōe Munekiyo! Wait!

NARRATOR: Surprised at Yoshitsune's words, he gasps but shows an innocent face.

[MIDAROKU stops and guiltlessly calls down the banamichi.]

MIDAROKU: Hey, Yabeyō! Our Commander is calling you! Hey there, Yabeyō! [He kneels and bows contritely to YOSHITSUNE.] No person called Yabeyō is here, your Lordship.

YOSHITSUNE: The saying is true: "when man is touched by extreme hatred, sorrow, or joy, these three are not forgotten through a lifetime." I recall with joy how, long ago, when my mother Tokiwa nursed me at her breast, your kindness saved her, my brothers, and myself from freezing in the snows of Fushimi outside the capital. Although I was only three years old, I remember your face and can clearly picture, whether you conceal it or not, the mole between your eyes. You disappeared soon after Councilor Shigemori died. It is good to see you well, Grandfather.

[YOSHITSUNE slaps the closed fan into his left fist, then grasps it firmly, as he looks intently at MIDAROKU.]

NARRATOR [sings to shamisen accompaniment]: Hearing this, Midaroku briskly returns . . .

[MIDAROKU rises. He slaps his thigh resolutely and, dropping his innocent look, stamps on stage. A STAGE ASSISTANT removes his sandals. He tucks the chisel away in his kimono and removes the cloth covering his forehead.]

. . . staring at Yoshitsune's face as if to bore a hole through it!

[He boldly mounts the steps and thrusts his face close to YOSHITSUNE's.]

MIDAROKU [fearlessly]: Your insight is monstrous! They say Lao Tzu was born wise,<sup>9</sup> that by the age of three Chuang Tzu could read a man's face! But you, Yoshitsune!

[He faces front and sits. A STAGE ASSISTANT helps him drop his kimono top, showing a samurai's white underkimono beneath it, and take off his cap, revealing a thatch of snow white hair. No longer acting the devious commoner, we see him as he really is: a proud samurai.]

9. Said to have been born an old man with white hair.

Had I not overlooked you that time, long ago, there would have been no general to breach the cliffs at Tekkai and at Hiyaorigoe and to reduce the Heike fastness at Suma Bay. Had I not saved Yoritomo's life, the Heike would be ascendant now. Aghh! The greatest error of my life was helping you! Because of you, Lord Shigemori knew the Heike faced a perilous future. He advised me, at the time of his death, to renounce the warrior's life, go into hiding, and offer masses in memory of all the Taira who might fall. I took under my care the only remaining Princess of the Taira family<sup>10</sup> and retired to Mikage Village with three thousand gold ryō<sup>11</sup> which was intended for memorial services at the Heike ancestral temple at Iozan. Throughout Banshū Province, at Nachi and Mount Kōya—at Heike mausoleums everywhere—I erected gravestones for those already departed, each memorial, each one, sprung from the bitter tears of its unknown donor . . . Yabeiyo Munekiyō!

[*He points to himself and screams his name as if it were a curse.*]  
Although I had not seen Atsumori since he was an infant and could not possibly remember his face, without knowing why, I somehow felt the man who came to order Atsumori's marker was a noble of the vanquished Heike, so I accepted his commission happily, never dreaming he was ordering a stone memorial on this shore for salvation of the soul of Kojirō, whose fate had changed his! Agh! The will of heaven is beyond man's understanding, but for the two infants whom I saved from death—Yoritomo and Yoshitsune—to become leaders who would utterly annihilate the greatest Taira nobility . . .!

NARRATOR [*emotionally sings to shamisen accompaniment*]: "... is fate too cruel to bear!"

[MIDAROKU clasps his hands supplicating heaven. His body shakes with emotion. He grinds his teeth.]

MIDAROKU: I am the traitor among the Heike who betrayed their trust! How the spirits of dead Taira lords and warriors will vent their hatred on me!

Ahh! Munekiyō! Wretched man!

[*Like one demented, he tears his hair. He strikes his chest and arms.*]  
NARRATOR [*at the same high pitch of emotion*]: First raging, then contrite, his tears . . . challenge a waterfall! Ahhhh!

[MIDAROKU tumbles down the steps and collapses, weeping bitterly in unison with the NARRATOR. The music quiets. Pause.]

Wise since birth, General Yoshitsune says . . .

YOSHITSUNE [*sensing KUMAGAI's presence offstage*]: Ah, it is you, Kumagai. Bring the box of armor from the small room.

NARRATOR [*sings quietly to shamisen accompaniment*]: Kumagai Jirō Naokane enters from within. Bearers place an armor box before their Lord. [KUMAGAI enters slowly from the inner room. He wears battle dress: dark armor, gloves, leggings, and helmet. He kneels to the right of YOSHITSUNE.]

10. Shigemori's daughter, Princess Koyuki.

11. Between \$90,000 and \$135,000.

TSUNE. Two BEARERS bring out a large wicker box and place it on the main stage in front of YOSHITSUNE.]

YOSHITSUNE [*carefully*]: Old man, deliver this box of armor to the princess. Do it . . . Midaroku!

MIDAROKU [*surprised*]: Midaroku, did you say? Ah, I see. A Genji general can't ask Munekiyō, friend of the Heike, for a favor! Ha, ha! Isn't this an interesting situation?

[*He chuckles and assumes his previous guise of innocent old age.*]  
I could do what you request, but armor for a girl? It seems inappropriate. I'll just peek inside . . .

[MIDAROKU trots casually to the box and unties the lid.]

NARRATOR [*sings to shamisen accompaniment*]: When he lifts the lid and looks inside . . .!

[*Opening the lid, he sees ATSUMORI. FUJI rushes forward.*]  
FUJI: Ah! Is it . . . ?

[MIDAROKU claps the lid on the box. She tries to open it. He holds the lid tightly with one hand and pushes her back with the other.]

MIDAROKU [*quietly, but prolonging each word*]: There is . . . nothing . . . inside.

[*She hesitates, then tries to open the lid again. He pushes her back gently and shakes his head. He looks at her meaningfully.*]  
Even a traitor would be satisfied. Give thanks to Kumagai, for . . .

[*He picks up the notice board and looks at it with tears in his eyes.*]  
... strike off the flower of one branch, strike off the flower of the other. Ahh! How grateful we are!

[*He bows to KUMAGAI and YOSHITSUNE, weeping quietly in gratitude.*]  
NARRATOR [*sings to shamisen accompaniment*]: Hearing this, Sagami turns to her husband . . .

SAGAMI [*clapping her eyes*]: Though I am resigned knowing my child's death was an act of loyalty, still, how could Kojirō and Atsumori, opponents in the battle, be exchanged?

KUMAGAI [*gruffly*]: I have told you: I carried Atsumori from the field pretending he was wounded. Obviously, it was Kojirō that Hitayama challenged and Kojirō's head I took!

NARRATOR [*continuing*]: She weeps at his harsh words.

SAGAMI: You are inhuman, Kumagai! He is not your child alone. After I have come one hundred, two hundred miles hoping anxiously to see his face, how can you scold me, saying nothing of what you have done except "obviously it was Kojirō's head I took?"

NARRATOR [*continuing*]: She has reason to weep bitter tears and raise her voice. The General understands her feelings.

[KUMAGAI sits impassively. SAGAMI, bent over, weeps loudly.]

YOSHITSUNE [*clearly*]: Kumagai. The time has come to depart for battle in the west. Prepare yourself.

KUMAGAI [*quietly, bowing*]: My Lord, please grant the leave I have requested.

YOSHITSUNE: I understand. From time immemorial, the samurai has fought



for fame in life in order to pass on glory to his heir. Should one's son die before him, the will to battle dies, too. I grant your request, Kumagai. Enter monkhood in good spirits and offer services for the repose of my parents' souls, I pray.

NARRATOR [*sings quietly to shamisen accompaniment*] : This compassionate command is heard gratefully, as he loosens his sash, slipping off his armor . . .

[KUMAGAI bows to YOSHITSUNE, then takes off his battle dress.

*Beneath the helmet his head is shaven and beneath his armor he wears a monk's black cloak and plain grey kimono. A STAGE ASSISTANT stacks armor, helmet, gloves, and breeches beside KUMAGAI.]*

Seeing this, Sagami says . . .

SAGAMI [*amazed*] : But . . . Kumagai . . . !

KUMAGAI [*calmly, holding a Buddhist rosary in his hands*] : I am doing nothing strange. In the midst of strife the General has generously granted my deep desire to renounce the world. From this moment, let me take the monk's name Renshō and turn my steps toward Amida Buddha's Western Paradise, where Kojiro, embarked before me upon the Nine Stages of Bliss, and I shall one day sit together on the same lotus. Buddha Merciful All Hail. "Namu Amida Butsu, Namu Amida Butsu, Namu Amida Butsu." NARRATOR [*very slowly sings to shamisen accompaniment*] : Commendable . . . and . . . heart-breaking!

dangiri  
share  
[KUMAGAI lifts the rosary to his forehead and prays. NARRATOR continues briskly.]

Thinking "a long stay brings misfortune," Midaroku plans to tie up the affair and quickly leave.

[MIDAROKU kneels in front of the armor box and tries to tie it onto his back, slipping his arms into large loops of rope fastened to either side of the box.]

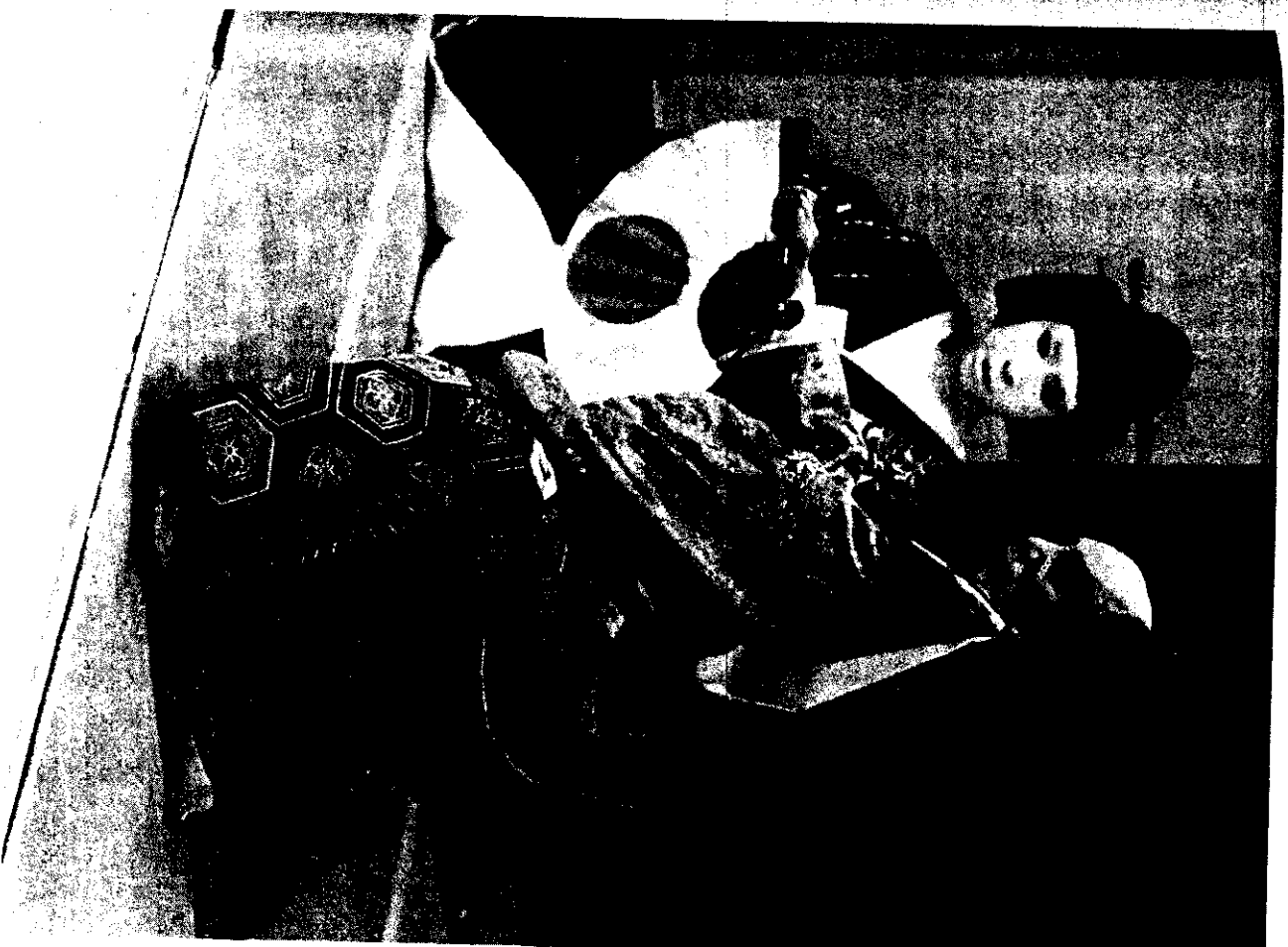
MIDAROKU: Yo, ho! Yo, ho! Yo, ho!

[*To Takemoto shamisen chords, he tries to rise several times, each time falling back because the load is so heavy. Panting, he tucks one leg under him, plants the notice board firmly in the ground, and, to accelerating shamisen music, manages at last to rise to his feet. He staggers left, then right, and finally stands straight. He poses in a mien, notice board against his shoulder, to loud battari tsuke beats. He speaks rhythmically, in exact time to chords of the Takemoto shamisen.*]

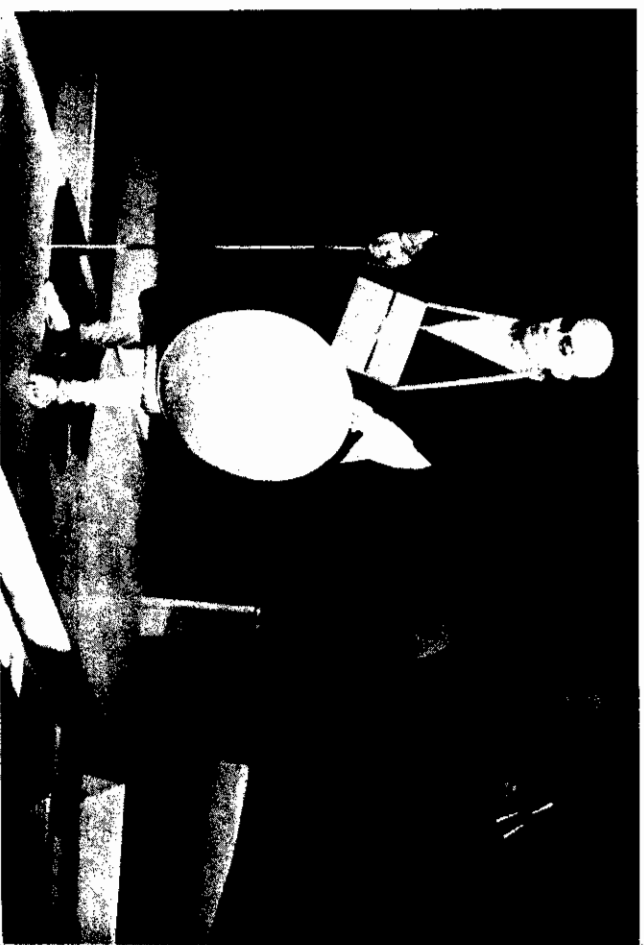
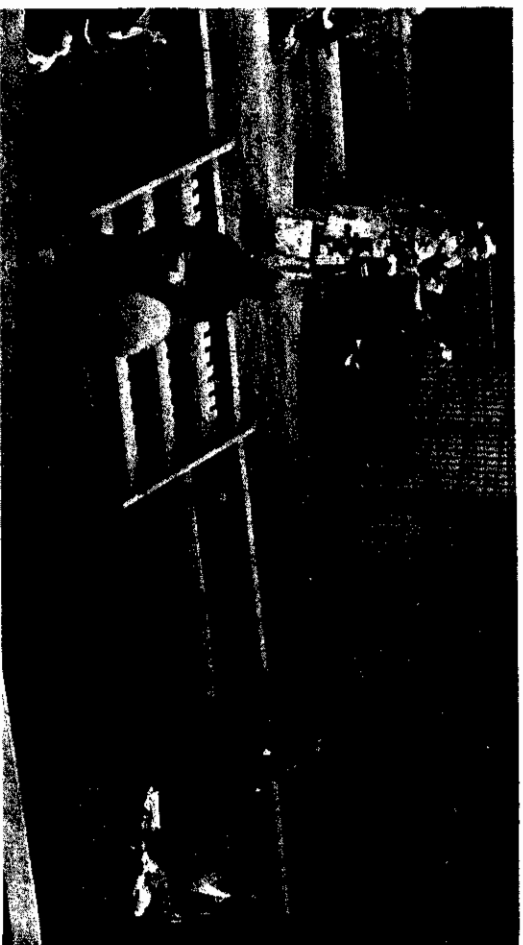
Lord Yoshitsune! What if Prince Atsumori gathers once again remnants of the Heike clan and returns evil for good?

YOSHITSUNE [*continuing the rhythmic style of speech*] : It would be no more than heaven's just retribution, for when Yoshitsune and his brother Yoritomo were saved they rewarded with evil the kindness done to them.

KUMAGAI [*strong, normal speech*] : Truly, when that time comes, the vanity of this world abandoned, unfettered to any man, Kumagai will stand apart from the bloody carnage and help equally the tortured souls of both Genji and Heike dead . . .



Kumagai concludes the narrative account (monogatari) of Atsumori's death. He strikes a pose with the open fan held to his chest. "There was nothing else to do but strike off the child's head! Thus I fulfilled the custom of the battlefield!" (*Sagami*: Nakamura Jakuchemon; *Kumagai*: Ichikawa Danjūrō) Page 196



Kumagai abandons his life as a warrior and prepares to leave as a wandering monk. (*Sagami*: Onoe Baiko; *Kumagai*: Matsumoto Koshiro; *Yoshitsune*: Ichikawa Somegorô; *Midaroku*: Onoe Shôroku; *Fuji*: Sawamura Sôjûrô)  
Page 209

Kumagai exits to Ôzatsuma shamisen music. The curtain covers the main stage isolating Kumagai on the hanamichi. (*Kumagai*: Ichikawa Somegorô; *Ôzatsuma Musician*: Kashiwa Isanosuke) Page 210

nori

NARRATOR: . . . offering prayers for their salvation.

[KUMAGAI raises the rosary to his forehead and eyes. MIDAROKU looks at KUMAGAI and laughs wryly.]

MIDAROKU [*speaking in strict rhythm of the Takemoto shamisen*]: When that time comes, Midaroku will abandon this world and return as Mune-kiyo!

KUMAGAI [*speaking normally*]: Thoughts of a monk's black robes fill my heart. I shall become a disciple of Priest Hônen, submitting to his teaching in Black Valley. [*Faces YOSHITSUNE.*] May your good fortune increase, my Lord.

NARRATOR [*sings to shamisen accompaniment*]: Saying this, wife joins husband . . .

[KUMAGAI sits on the steps. A RETAINER passes to SAGAMI straw sandals which she ties to KUMAGAI's feet.]

. . . the stonecutter, together with Lady Fuji, stand beneath the caves of the encampment.

[FUJI kneels by MIDAROKU and looks questioningly at the box.

MIDAROKU indicates with a reassuring nod that ATSUMORI is safe in his care. From opposite sides of the stage the two women and two men exchange parting glances.]

SAGAMI and FUJI [*slowly in unison*]: If destiny allows. . .

NARRATOR: . . . say the women . . .

KUMAGAI and MIDAROKU: . . . we shall meet again . . .

NARRATOR: . . . say the men.

YOSHITSUNE [*interrupting in a clear, commanding voice*]: Live your lives in good health!

NARRATOR [*sings to shamisen accompaniment*]: Hearing their Lord's will, with tears of gratitude, tears of sad remembrance . . .

[KUMAGAI looks at YOSHITSUNE with an expression of gratitude. He bursts into tears and bows down to the ground. After a moment he rises, and SAGAMI puts over his shoulder a monk's alms bag and gives him a

plain straw hat and walking staff, passed to her by the RETAINER. He takes a few steps to the right, holding hat and staff limply at his sides.]

. . . reminded, the General takes into his own hands Kôjô's head.

[*Receiving the head from a SAMURAI, YOSHITSUNE rises and extends it, face forward, toward KUMAGAI.*]

YOSHITSUNE [*with a catch in his clear voice*]: This shall be consecrated at Suma Temple, that the unblemished name of . . . Atsumori, inscribed in gold, shall live for generations to come.

[*They pose for a moment in silence, then express their unbearable anguish in linked dialogue of alternating phrases of seven and five syllables.*]

MIDAROKU: Though we pity the flower, mentioned on the sign . . .

FUJI: . . . of Musashibô Benkei, we must pity more . . .

SAGAMI: . . . the forsaken samurai . . .

RETAINER: . . . pride of warrior thrown aside . . .

KUMAGAI: . . . a traveler whose place of rest will never be known . . .

watarizetfû  
shichigocho

YOSHITSUNE: . . . in this transient and mutable . . .

ALL [*in unison*] : . . . world of man!

NARRATOR: Tears cloud their voices!

[KUMAGAI bows to YOSHITSUNE, then to MIDAROKU. As he turns to go, SAGAMI reaches out to stop him. He brushes past her and walks onto the banamichi.]

YOSHITSUNE: Kumagai!

[YOSHITSUNE holds out KOJIRO's head. Slowly KUMAGAI turns back. Though he has renounced the world, he cannot help wishing for a final view of his son.]

KUMAGAI [*angushed*] : Now that I am entering Buddha's blessed land . . . all cares have vanished!

[He turns away from KOJIRO to gain control over himself, trying to forget the ties of earthly affections, but he cannot. Again he turns to look at his son.]

Ahh! Sixteen years have passed, like a single day! Ahh! It is a dream, a dream!

[Numbly he lifts his hand to wipe away a single tear. He turns his back on KOJIRO.]

NARRATOR [*quietly sings to slow shamisen accompaniment*] : A single teardrop of dew, splashing to the ground, from a holly leaf sprinkled, by winter's first snow, melted in the sun's clear light . . . how like Kumagai!<sup>12</sup>

[A single sharp *ki* clack signals the final tableau: KUMAGAI collapses to his knees at seven-three and buries his head in the straw hat; FUJI starts to cross to KUMAGAI, but MIDAROKU forces her back with the notice board; SAGAMI looks at KUMAGAI, then falls forward weeping; YOSHITSUNE holds the head firmly in both hands. All pose in a strong group, or *happari*, mie as the stick drum is struck loudly three times in the Dangiri pattern. The curtain is slowly closed to loud, accelerating *ki* clacks.

KUMAGAI remains budded over on the banamichi. The edge of the curtain is pulled back to allow the *geza* musicians to see KUMAGAI. An Ozatsuma shamisen PLAYER enters from the wings and stands immediately behind KUMAGAI, one foot placed for balance on a small stool brought out by a STAGE ASSISTANT. Very faint and distant sounds of drums and cymbals playing Tōyose are heard from the rear of the banamichi, then silence. KUMAGAI rises, thinking of the active and honored life he is renouncing. The Ozatsuma shamisen begins to play soft, widely spaced, tentative chords of Urei Sanjū, "Sorrowful Melody." Drawn once again by the memory of the son he killed, KUMAGAI slowly pivots to look back. His shoulders are slumped, the hat and staff hang loosely in his hands. Music stops. He stands motionless, silently recalling the past. Then very quietly the Ozatsuma shamisen plays Okui Sanjū, "Departing Melody." He blinks back tears and forces himself to turn his back forever on his former life. He looks down the banamichi, thinking of the unknown future. For a

12. Alluding to the light of Buddha's salvation.

moment he is overwhelmed by anguish and melancholy. His lips tremble and his hands shake. He controls himself, slowly raises the hat over his head, half glances back over his shoulder again, then drops his head forlornly and poses. Hesitantly, as if worldly ties held him back, he begins to leave, each deliberate footstep accented by Tōyose drum and cymbals, and Ozatsuma shamisen music. He pauses, looks up once more, then, with an expression of agonized resolve, he pulls the hat sharply down in a gesture of humility and runs faster and faster down the banamichi and off to accelerating music and loud bata-bata tsuke beats. In complete silence the banamichi curtain closes behind him, the corner of the main curtain is pulled closed, and the Ozatsuma musician goes off right. A sharp clack of the *ki* signals drums and flute to play Shagiri. The performance is concluded.]