

From

Shakespeare Translation via  
Japanese Culture

Hisae Niki

(Kansai-sha Ltd. 1981)

NOTE: This is a translation from the original screenplay, so there are some significant differences from the final screen version. Also, the translation here does not always match Donald Richie's subtitles, especially in the sections of "verse" (eg. at the beginning and end, and in the dance during the banquet). I've tried to note the major differences.

## Kununosujo (Throne of Blood)

SCENE I. The ruins of a castle.

CHORUS. Behold, the ruins of a castle inhabited by deep-rooted delusion,  
Perpetually haunted by spirits.  
The ruins show the fate of demonic men with treacherous desires.

Life is the same now as in ancient times.

[The ruins of Kununosu Castle.

Crumbling stone walls.

Water of a moat with green scum, glimmering dimly.

Among a vast stretch of rank weeds stands a decayed placard.

On it are the faint traces of barely legible writing:

"The Ruins of Kununosu Castle"

A gust of wind runs through the grass and ruffles the surface of the moat.

A sobbing old pine tree rustles against a stone wall.

And in the whispering breeze through the pine tree a faint sound of a war drum and trumpet is heard.]

\* This script was written by Akira Kurosawa, in collaboration with Hideo Oguni, Shinobu Hashimoto and Ryuzo Kikushima. It was produced by Akira Kurosawa and Shojiro Motoki. The film was directed by Akira Kurosawa. This script was translated by Hisae Niki.

## SCENE II. Kumonosu Castle.

[The stronghold of Kumonosu Castle towering among mountains. Viewed from outside, activity in the castle cannot be perceived. The architecture of the castle, the "Black Style", profoundly depresses all who see it.]

A soldier approaches, galloping his horse along a road leading to the castle gate.

Riding up, the soldier, covered with blood, tumbles from his horse, and knocks at the towering door.]

## SCENE III. The castle courtyard.

[The Lord of Kumonosu Castle, Kuniharu Tsuzuki, ready for departure to the front, sits upstage center, flanked by Noriyasu Odagura, his war tactician, and other generals in attendance. Holding their breath, they hear the report of the bleeding messenger who kneels before them.]

MESSENGER. As you know, the revolt of General Fujimaki of the North Castle struck like such a thunderbolt that the Fifth and Fourth Forts fell easy prey to flames, and the Third Fort had no time to prepare a defense.

KUNIHARU. What of the Second Fort?

MESSENGER. General Yoshiaki Miki of the Second Fort has rallied his collapsing forces and is now fighting with lion-like fury.

KUNIHARU. And, what of the First Fort?

MESSENGER. General Taketoki Washizu of the First Fort is now fighting single-handed, against some four hundred men under Inui's command. He charged across the border, on seeing the Fifth and the Fourth Forts ablaze.

KUNIHARU. Oh, God! They've fallen into Inui's trap!

NORIYASU. What of Washizu, how are things going in his battle?

MESSENGER. [Fainting]. De-sper-ate . . .

[Unable to finish, the messenger falls unconscious.]

## Kumonosu-jō (Throne of Blood)

AN OLD GENERAL. Help him.

[The wounded messenger is taken away. Kuniharu and his generals remain silent.]

Then Kuniharu, surveying those present, speaks.]

KUNIHARU. Shall we venture forth, or shall we hold this castle?

[All are silent.]

NORIYASU [calmly]. There's no choice but to hold this castle. If we fight to repulse the attack of a winning enemy, we only lead to the fatal defeat of our own troops, I fear. The first thing to do is to deploy our advanced guards in Kumole Forest, lead the enemy into that labyrinth and cut them to pieces. Let us try to deal them as heavy a blow as we can, then withdraw our guards and shut ourselves in the castle. There is no other path to salvation.

KUNIHARU. Have we enough provisions?

ONE OF THE GENERALS. Enough for some three months if we eat watery rice-gruel.

[They all remain gloomily silent.]

A VOICE. If you please, my lord. Here is a messenger from the Second Fort.

OLD GENERAL. Let him enter.

[A messenger comes in with faltering steps and, at the point of collapse, falls to his knees in front of Kuniharu.]

MESSENGER. My lord! I congratulate you on your fortune in battle.

KUNIHARU. Why?

MESSENGER. In the battle of the Second Fort, General Miki fought with such irresistible force that the enemy almost abandoned their attack. At that very moment, General Washizu of the First Fort, who had just defeated Inui's storming troops, seized the initiative. Shooting arrows, his men rode into the battle field, and . . .

KUNIHARU. Did he! Well done, Washizu.

MESSENGER. Yes, my lord. Before his attack the enemy gave way at once. The battle is almost decided.

ANOTHER MESSENGER. The men of both General Washizu and Miki are now pursuing the enemy, who are starting to flee. They pushed them back to the North Castle for ensiegement.

\* \* \*

ANOTHER MESSENGER. General Fujimaki of the North Castle sues for peace, offering to become a bonze.

KUNIHARU. No pardon. Noriyasu!

NORIYASU. Yes, my lord.

KUNIHARU. Go to the North Castle with your men and behold Fujimaki. Strengthen the border defense and if Inui shows no signs of moving his men, send Washizu and Miki back to the castle. I myself shall reward them for their service.

NORIYASU. I understand.

#### SCENE IV. Kumote Forest.

[Lightning and thunder.

Enter two galloping horsemen.

They stop at the fork of a road with many branches and look around, right and left.

Suddenly sunlight breaks through and outlines the figures of these two horsemen in bold relief.

A horrifyingly fresh smell of war arises from the two armoured figures, who are smeared with blood, mud, and rain.

They are Taketoki Washizu and Yoshiaki Miki.]

MIKI [looking up at the sky]. What a day today!

I have never seen such strange weather.

[Clouds again cover the sun.

Lightning and thunder.]

WASHIZU. Let's hurry up. I'd rather not lose any time in seeing

how delighted our Lord will be to hear the news.

[He whips his horse, and heads off.

Miki follows him.

They gallop their horses.

They gallop as fast as their horses can carry them, and then stop at a fork in the road.

It is the same place as before.]

WASHIZU. What? This is...

[They stare at each other.]

WASHIZU. This... this is where we stopped our horses before, is it not?

MIKI. Well. Behold, these trampled hoof prints!

WASHIZU. How strange! Do you really think that this is Kumote Forest?

MIKI. Certainly.

WASHIZU. Then, one more gallop will take us to the castle, you know.

MIKI. Yes.

WASHIZU. But... we have already been galloping in the forest for some time, yet there is no sign of an exit.

MIKI. Ha, ha, ha. Surely worthy of the name—Kumote, Cobweb Forest. Like the threads of a spider, roads run in various directions and misguide the enemy. This is really a strategic position for our Kumonosu Castle.

WASHIZU. Nonsense! Unlike our enemy, we, who belong to the castle, are familiar with the forest, are we not?

MIKI. ...

[Washizu fixes an arrow in his bow and shoots it at the root of a huge tree, as lightning flashes and thunder rolls.

As if answering the shot, a strange laughter reverberates throughout the forest.]

WASHIZU. You heard it. An evil spirit, it's the work of an evil spirit.

MIKI. Hum.

[Miki cradles his spear.]

MIKI. Well, on the honour of my spear, I'll get out of this forest.

WASHIZU. Yes. Witness, God of War, by my arrow and bow.

[Washizu, fixing an arrow in the bow, and Miki, brandishing his spear overhead... they breathe suddenly into a gallop, yelling war cries.

Two men galloping; Miki brandishing his spear in every direction, and

Washizu shooting arrows before them, continue galloping.

Two men galloping, shrouded in lightning, in thunder, and in strange laughter.

Two men galloping.

Two men galloping.

Their horses suddenly stand erect, and cannot be pressed forward.

The frightened eyes, gasping sounds, and trembling ears of the horses.

Miki suddenly stops spurring his horse.

Looking ahead, he shouts involuntarily.]

MIKI. My God! What's that?

[Washizu looks hard to the front.

Ahead of them is a place rather sparsely wooded, leaving a small open space of grass. There stands a small straw-thatched cottage, deserted. The lightning and thunder, which were so violent a moment ago, have mysteriously abated.

A beam of light falling through the trees calmly shines upon the cottage.]

MIKI. Have you ever seen that cottage?

WASHIZU. No, I have never seen such a cottage. This also must be the work of an evil spirit.

MIKI. But...

WASHIZU. Behold, our horses! Their fright is real.

[Washizu fixes an arrow to the string and draws it to the full, aiming at the cottage.

At that moment, a delicate, sad song reaches them from the inside of the cottage.]

SONG. Ah, miserable, miserable!

Born in this human world,

Living a transient life like an insect's,  
How silly to worry ourselves!

[Washizu, involuntarily, relaxes his bow.

They look at each other.

They approach the cottage, as if drawn by the song.]

SONG. Ah, miserable, miserable!

The life of flowers is too transient,

Only to turn into decomposed matter.

[The two men peep into the cottage over a fence.]

#### SCENE V. Inside the cottage.

[An old woman, alone, singing and spinning threads.]

SONG. Such being the case, what men do in this world,  
Burning ourselves with the flames of five desires,  
Bathing ourselves in the water of five impurities,  
Piling up our sins more and more...

#### SCENE VI. Outside the cottage.

[Washizu and Miki are quietly peeping inside.]

#### SCENE VII. Inside the cottage.

[An old woman still singing.]

SONG. Reaching the last stage of delusion,  
Rotten flesh turns to flowers  
Offensive odour becomes perfume,  
What a thrilling life for man!  
How delightful, delightful!

#### SCENE VIII. Outside the cottage.

[Breaking down the fence, Washizu and Miki enter.

They surround the old woman, Washizu, ready with his arrow drawn, and Miki, with his spear poised.]

MIKI. What are you? A man or a devil in the flesh?

WASHIZU. Hey, you! No words? You surely can speak, since you can sing.

AN OLD WOMAN. Yes, Taketoki Washizu, head of the First Fort. WASHIZU. What! Do you know me?

AN OLD WOMAN. Yes, lord of the North Castle from this evening. WASHIZU. What? I, lord of the North Castle from this evening?

AN OLD WOMAN. Yes, my lord. And, lord of Kumonosu Castle hereafter.

WASHIZU. Stop this babbling! You carry your joke too far.

AN OLD WOMAN. Why get angry at such auspicious news?

WASHIZU [domineeringly]. Besides our present Lord, there is no lord in Kumonosu Castle.

[The old woman meets Taketoki's gaze fearlessly with a calm yet strange smile.]

AN OLD WOMAN. How foolish a man is! Why, to be afraid to plumb his own heart!

WASHIZU [in an uncontrolled fit of passion]. You evil spirit!

MIKI. Wait! Wait a second! Even though this woman might be a devil in the flesh, she doesn't look as if she is chattering nonsense for nothing, since your arrow is aimed at just above her breast. I'll question her seriously.

[Miki speaks to the old woman.]

MIKI. Hey, you. Listen, carefully! Can you see the future as our eyes can see the present?

AN OLD WOMAN. Yes, General Yoshitaki Miki, head of the Second Fort and head of the First Fort from this evening.

MIKI. What... head of the First Fort from this evening? Well, then, what of my future wealth and rank?

AN OLD WOMAN. Your fortune is lesser and greater than General Washizu's.

MIKI. What? What do you mean?

AN OLD WOMAN. Your son is to be lord of Kumonosu Castle hereafter.

MIKI. ?!

WASHIZU. ?!

[They look at each other, not a little shocked.

Then, when they return their eyes to the old woman, no sign of her remains.

They gallop through the cottage.]

#### SCENE IX. Kumote Forest. An old battleground.

[Enter Washizu and Miki.

They look around.

There is no one to be seen.

When they look back, no cottage stands.

A small hill has appeared where the cottage once stood.

A heap of skeletons in armour is visible if one concentrates.

The armour is decayed and completely covered with weeds. Weird as a ghost's walls.

Both Washizu and Miki, stricken with horror, remain standing and staring at the heap.]

#### [Series of shots of Washizu and Miki galloping through fog] SCENE X. The edge of the forest.

[Washizu and Miki, with absent-minded expressions on their faces, enter on horseback.]

MIKI. Behold! There's our castle. Finally we've left the forest. Now a short gallop will bring us to the castle.

WASHIZU. One second! I'm completely exhausted. My armour feels unusually heavy.

MIKI. Ah, no wonder. We have already ridden our horses to death three times since the battle yesterday. Shall we rest for a while? WASHIZU. Yes.

[Dismounting, they sit down on the grass and peer up at the distant castle.]

MIKI. Awfully sleepy. My only hope is to get some sound sleep.

WASHIZU. I myself feel as if now in a dream. I wonder if possibly in my dream I met that devil in the flesh.

MIKI. We say dreams are the expression of our five desires. Frankly speaking, every warrior has dreamt of becoming lord of the castle.

WASHIZU. Did she not say that your son shall be lord of that castle?

MIKI. Why, you yourself shall become lord of that castle, indeed!

WASHIZU. Ha, ha, ha, ha.

MIKI. Ha, ha, ha, ha.

WASHIZU. He, he, he. But, before then, I am to be lord of the North Castle.

MIKI. I, too, will be head of the First Fort.

WASHIZU. A matter for congratulations, is it not?

MIKI. Yes, indeed.

WASHIZU. Ha, ha, ha, ha,...

[They suddenly stop laughing, and brood over the matter. Then simultaneously they open their mouths.]

WASHIZU AND MIKI. But...

[They become silent.]

WASHIZU. What were you going to say?

MIKI. You, too?

WASHIZU. What were you going to say?

MIKI. You, too?

WASHIZU. ...

MIKI. ...

[Washizu suddenly stands up and jumps on his horse. Miki also gallops off. They rush towards the castle.]

SCENE XI. The castle courtyard.

[Groves of spears and arrows shining in the bonfire light.

Surrounded by them, Taketoki and Yoshiaki kneel in front of Lord Kuniharu Tsuzuki, on whom other generals are also waiting.

Kuniharu presents Taketoki with a splendid long sword.]

KUNIHARU. Taketoki Washizu, you rendered distinguished service in this battle! From this evening, you are lord of the North Castle!

[Taketoki and Yoshiaki, who sits next to him, both give a start. ~~Arrows of spears and arrows away accompanied by shouting cheers.~~ Taketoki, ~~to the top of~~ ~~cheers,~~ raises his sword over his head, with trembling hands as a token of gratitude.

Kuniharu takes another sword and presents it to Yoshiaki.]

KUNIHARU. Yoshiaki Miki, your service was no less distinguished. You are head of the First Fort from this evening!

[Both Yoshiaki and Taketoki give another start.

~~Hiattant!~~ ~~Another roaring cheer.~~ Yoshiaki, with trembling hands, also raises the sword over his head in gratitude.

They stand up and bow.

~~Soldiers congratulate them by twanging bowsstrings and beating shields.~~ Among their cheers, Taketoki and Yoshiaki, empathizing with each other with strange keenness, silently go back to their seats, staring.]

SCENE XII. Distant view of the North Castle.

[Green rice-fields everywhere.

At the top of a little high mountain far away, the North Castle is seen with a thicket of assorted green trees at its back.]

SCENE XIII. The courtyard of the North Castle.

[In the brilliant sun of early summer, Taketoki's retainers gather together here and there, and busy themselves in attending to weapons, arms, and horses.

Bush warblers singing in a hill at the back.

Sprightly neighs of young horses.

Everything in the scenery is peaceful and blooming.

A group of retainers mend armour, sitting in a circle.

One of them gives a wide yawn.]

RETAINER 1. How peaceful!

RETAINER 2. Yes, it seems we are in Paradise.

RETAINER 3. What a difference between living in the fort and

living comfortably in the castle! Greatness is really relative, isn't it?

RETAINER 4. We retainers are also fortunate, but imagine how satisfied our lord and lady are!

SCENE XIV. Inside the North Castle. Taketoki's room.

[Compared with the brightness of the fresh green outside, it is very chilly and dark here.

Taketoki and his wife, Asaji, sit facing each other in the room.

Bush warblers sing.

Asaji, with a pale and immobile face like a Nô-mask, talks with frequent pauses.]

ASAJI. Did you... make up your mind...?

[Taketoki raises his face in confusion, and talks in a restless tone.]

TAKETOKI. Well... I dreamt an awful dream... In fact I have been bewitched. No more delusion! The lord of Kumonosu Castle... to have such an inordinate desire...

ASAJI [calmly]. You wouldn't say that it's an inordinate desire...

You know well there's no warrior who does not crave it.

TAKETOKI [in a high pitch]. No, I... I feel all right as I am! I'll be devoted to the discharge of my duties as head of the North Castle. I'd rather live peacefully, content with my lot.

ASAJI [in a monotone voice]. You won't have that peace.

TAKETOKI. Why?

ASAJI. If... If General Yoshiaki Miki should reveal the prophecy of the evil spirit of Kumote Forest... to our lord, then...

[Taketoki, frightened, stares hard at Asaji.]

ASAJI. Then, we won't be left as we are. Our lord, taking you for a usurper threatening his throne... he will surely besiege the North Castle with his men without delay.

[Staring at Asaji agnust, Taketoki broods.]

ASAJI. Only two choices exist... sitting and waiting to be killed by our lord... or killing our lord to become Lord of Kumonosu Castle yourself!

TAKETOKI [as if screaming]. It is high treason to kill our lord!

ASAJI [in a constant monotone]. The same lord... he himself ascended the throne by killing his previous lord, as you well know.

TAKETOKI [screams out desperately]. The reason was... that the previous lord distrusted our lord and tried to kill him! Our lord trusts me! I say, he treats me most kindly!

ASAJI. Because he doesn't know what's at the bottom of your heart.

TAKETOKI [wet with greasy sweat on his face]. At the bottom of my heart? Why, there's nothing shameful in me!

ASAJI [with a slight smile on her Nô mask-like face]. You tell a lie. TAKETOKI [high-handedly]. Nonsense! I... I am satisfied as head of the North Castle!

ASAJI [without changing her expression]. Even though it is true, ... would our lord believe it... after having heard about that prophecy from General Miki...?

TAKETOKI. Miki... From our childhood Miki has been my closest comrade in arms. He won't play such a mean trick!

ASAJI. In this world, struggling for fame and distinction, parents kill their children and children kill their parents. This is a corrupt age when we must kill others to avoid being killed. I'm worried to death... that General Miki might have already... revealed it to our lord...

TAKETOKI [in an agitated voice]. Asaji, don't be so distrustful! [At that moment, a flurry of footsteps is heard.

One of the retainers comes to the threshold of the room and kneels.]

RETAINER. If you please, my lord. Some three hundred men of

Kumonosu Castle are silently stationed in the forest to our rear.  
**TAKETOKI.** What?!

[Startled, he stares at Asaji's face. She does not change her No-mask-like expression.]

With flurry of steps, another retainer runs in and kneels before them.]  
**ANOTHER RETAINER.** If you please, my lord. We see a tremendous crowd of men in arms, in every forest and in every mountain cave that surrounds this North Castle. They look like men from Kumonosu Castle, but they advance quietly, holding their banners and spears down and making their horses bite something in their mouths.

[**Taketoki**, aghast, stares at Asaji's face again.]

She does not make a motion, but conveys a terrible, strong will in her expressionless face.

The hurried beat of horses' hoofs.

**Taketoki**, snatching up his sword, stands.]

**SCENE XV. The North Castle. The front gate.**

[A horseman approaches, galloping amid clouds of dust. He stops at the front gate and shouts in a loud voice.]

**HERALD.** If you please, **Taketoki Washizu**, Lord of the North

Castle. Our senior lord is coming!

**SCENE XVI. The North Castle. An open corridor.**

[**Taketoki** violently dashes out of the room and shouts.]  
**TAKETOKI.** What's the matter!

[An elderly-looking retainer runs in.]  
**RETAINER.** Sir, our senior lord is coming.

[**Taketoki** jumps down on the ground and runs out.]

**TAKETOKI.** Hey, everyone, come out! Get ready for the meeting!

**SCENE XVII. The front gate.**

[**Taketoki** comes running with a shout.]

**TAKETOKI.** Hey, everybody, come out! Get ready for the meeting!  
 [The herald soldier, hearing **Taketoki** shout, speaks to him.]

**HERALD.** General **Washizu**, it's really not necessary.

Our senior lord is paying a surreptitious visit, only for hunting. There's no need for such a pompous gathering.

[**Taketoki** stares at him, half in doubt.]

**SCENE XVIII. On a road.**

[**Kuniharu** **Tsuzuki**, lightly dressed in his hunting suit, comes on horseback, feeling relaxed.]

His heir **Kunimaru**, **Noriyasu Odagura**, **Yoshiaki Miki** and several generals follow him, all in hunting suits and talking cheerfully.

Behind them, beaters follow with game such as wild boars and deer on their shoulders.

Everything looks peaceful, and there is no indication of hostility.]

**SCENE XIX. Inside the North Castle. **Taketoki's** room.**

[**Kuniharu** sits in the highest front seat, and **Kunimaru**, **Noriyasu**, **Yoshiaki** and others sit alongside.]

**Taketoki** and **Asaji** lie prostrate before **Kuniharu**.]

**TAKETOKI.** I sincerely congratulate you on taking such a good bag.  
**KUNIHARU.** Well... are you surprised, since we came so suddenly?

To tell the truth, the hunting is only diversionary tactics...

[**Taketoki** stiffens.]

**KUNIHARU.** In the guise of hunters, our soldiers advance; I'm going to attack **Inui**.

[**Taketoki**, unintentionally, raises his face and stares at **Kuniharu**. Surprised looks on everyone else's face as well.]



Only Noriyasu gives a slight nod as if he already knew everything.]  
 KUNIHARU. I can endure Inui's behaviour no longer. When he caused trouble, helping the revolt of Fujimaki, we held back our pursuit... since we were looking forward to an occasion such as today. Hark! We'll station our headquarters in the North Castle. Gathering the main force on the border, we will let them attack the enemy when we are fully prepared... Before then, everything is secret... You understand?

[They all nod approval.]

KUNIHARU. Taketoki!

TAKETOKI. Yes, my lord.

KUNIHARU. Yoshiaki!

YOSHIAKI. Yes, my lord.

KUNIHARU. I will reward you for your service in the previous battle. I order Taketoki to serve as head of the van of the attack, and Yoshiaki to take charge of Kumonosu Castle during my absence!!  
 TAKETOKI AND YOSHIAKI. Yes, at your command.  
 [Taketoki and Yoshiaki, deeply moved with joy, bow prostrate. So does Asaji, but her profile is still expressionless.]

SCENE XX. Inside the North Castle. A hall (night).

[The light of a candle.

Taketoki and Asaji sit, facing each other.]

TAKETOKI. Asaji, now your suspicious nature should be satisfied. Our lord trusts me, I'm sure. In your suspicious mind, brooding over Yoshiaki's slander, an evil spirit lies hidden.

ASAJI. I... I do not think so.

TAKETOKI. Why not? Listen... you see, our lord trusts me above all others... That is why he gave me such an important duty as head of the van.

ASAJI. The leader of the vanguard will be a target, both from the front and the back.

TAKETOKI. ?!

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ASAJI. How wicked our lord is, I dare say, occupying the North Castle by the power of eloquence, leaving Kumonosu Castle in charge of trusted Miki, without exposing him to danger, but exposing a man like you, whom he hates, to arrows and bullets.

TAKETOKI. ?!

ASAJI. And General Miki will play the spectator on the watchtower of the castle and, with a smiling face, enjoy the end of his optimistic friend—you.

TAKETOKI [confused].

SCENE XXI. In front of the bedroom.

[In the open corridor, flooded with bonfires, three strong soldiers stand guard.

Looking in one direction, all of them ready their spears.]

SOLDIERS. Who's there?

[Two retainers of the North Castle come in with torches.]

RETAINER. We are retainers from the North Castle.

SOLDIER. This is the bedroom of our lord. Even though you are from the North Castle, you can not enter this evening.

RETAINER. We won't go near his bedroom. We only go to open the never-opened room.

SOLDIER. The never-opened room?

RETAINER. Yes, it is there that Fujimaki, the former lord of the North Castle, killed himself! We keep it closed, since the floor which was stained with his slimy blood cannot be cleaned, even with a hand-ax.

SOLDIER. Then why do you open it this particular night?

RETAINER. We are going to make a bed there for my lord, as our senior lord occupies our lord's bedroom.

SOLDIER. Your duty is well served. Please come in.  
 [They leave with a bow.]

## SCENE XXII. In front of the never-opened room.

[They enter.]

Opening the door, they light the inside with torches and peer uneasily into the room.]

RETAINER A. How strange! I, the man who has crossed a sea of blood many a time in battle, I shudder at the sight of this bloody stain, whenever I see it.

RETAINER B. Because it is the blood of a dog... the blood of treason and injustice. And yet, it is the blood of a coward, who rebelled, was defeated, then begged for mercy and life.

[Cuckoos.]

RETAINER A [looking up]. Damn it! The bird of ill omen sings tonight... Come on, let's finish our job and get out of here as soon as possible.

## SCENE XXIII. The hall.

[Taketoki, ~~and others~~, is now a slave to his doubt. \*

Asaji continues talking calmly.]

ASAJI. You say that I'm too suspicious... but even I could not proceed without believing that prophecy.

TAKETOKI. ?

ASAJI. Please, consider what is happening. Observe that arrangements for the fulfillment of the prophecy have already been made.

TAKETOKI. ?

ASAJI. Is this not enough to convince you?... Our lord flew into your reach by himself.

TAKETOKI [appalled].

ASAJI. If you fail tonight, you will never have such a good opportunity again.

TAKETOKI. What kind of pretext can I have for committing treason? Nay, on what pretext can I command all the troops!

ASAJI. Even though pretending to trust you, our lord leaves the \*He paces around the platform where Duncan sat in the earlier scene.

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guard to Noriyasu's men, which is an unexpected piece of good luck for us.

TAKETOKI. ?

ASAJI. You ply the guards with sake containing a drug, stab our lord as soon as they fall asleep, and cry out to the whole troops that it's the deed of Noriyasu!

TAKETOKI. ....

[Cuckoos.]

ASAJI. How do you interpret the voice of the cuckoo? Does it not ask whether you risked your life for the whole world?... I hear it that way! To me the note of a cuckoo is a voice from above, encouraging you to aim at the whole world, with Kumonosu Castle as the base of operations.

[They stare hard at each other.]

Footsteps. Retainers, A and B, ~~come in~~.

RETAINER A. We made your beds.

ASAJI. Thanks for your service.

[They are going to leave with a bow.]

ASAJI [calls them back]. Well, the guards of our senior lord, how are they doing?

RETAINER A. They are keeping all night vigil, with their spears ready.

ASAJI. Oh, my! Then, I'll treat them to this sake.

[Standing up calmly, she goes in the darkness of the corner of the room.]

. She comes out with the bottle of sake.]

## SCENE XXIV. In front of the bedroom.

[Bonfires dwindle.]

Near the fire, three guards sleeping like the dead.

A bottle of sake overturned near them.

A rustle of clothes.

The figure of Asaji appears dimly through the darkness, and spies on \*Asaji leads him onto the platform and kneels.

the guards.]

SCENE XXV. The never-opened room.

[Taketoki alone sits in the center of the room. His shadow flickers with the light of the candle. A gloomy atmosphere.

Taketoki, with glaring, bloody eyes, stares at something. A stain of dark blood splashed on the wainscot.

Taketoki averts his eyes from it.

However, on the floor where he has his eyes fixed, there is a grotesque mark drawn in blood.

Taketoki, unable to stand the atmosphere, suddenly stands up, but dares not move, seeing Asaji enter.

Asaji, with a spear in her hand, calmly enters.

Taketoki stares at Asaji, driven to the wall.

Asaji approaches him and hands the spear to him.

Then, both, with faces as white as a sheet, stare at each other.]

SCENE XXVI. The sky.

[A cuckoo, flying close to a crescent moon looking like a sharpened sickle, cries an alarm.]

SCENE XXVII. The never-opened room.

[Looking up at the sky, Taketoki stares at Asaji for a moment with a grotesque smile, and leaves falteringly.

Asaji sees him off, and calmly sits down. Turns to look at stain. ~~She sits firmly in the same posture with not the slightest movement~~

Looks again. Suddenly stands and runs to stain, circles and kneels. Turns away from stain as Washizu enters. — A long interval —

With a horrifying expression on his face, splattered with blood, Take-

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<sup>(DANC'S)</sup> toki dashes in, tries to stand erect, supported by his spear, but sinks down on the ground.

Seeing him squat, Asaji snatches the spear from his hand and leaves.]

SCENE XXVIII. In front of the bedroom.

[Asaji enters.

She puts the blood-stained spear in the hand of one of the sleeping guards.]

SCENE XXIX. The never-opened room.

[Taketoki, gasping, with his hands on ~~the floor.~~ <sup>his knees.</sup> Asaji returns.

She goes to the corner of the room in haste, and washes her blood-stained hands in a basin.

Taketoki, with vacant eyes, gazes at her washing.

Throwing a contemptuous look at Taketoki, Asaji runs out of the room.]

SCENE XXX. The never-opened room. Outside.

[Asaji dashes out and screams.]

ASAJI. Traitors! Traitors!

SCENE XXXI. The never-opened room.

[Taketoki, who had been dumbfounded, suddenly comes to himself and runs out.]

SCENE XXXII. The never-opened room. Outside.

[Dashing out of the room, Taketoki thunders at the highest pitch of his voice.]

TAKETOKI. Every one of you, come out! The worst possible tragedy has happened to our senior lord!

SCENE XXXIII. The bedroom. Outside.

[Hearing alarm shouts and the rush of footsteps, three guards, who were lying asleep, stagger to their feet, and struggle desperately. Taketoki, dashing in, cuts one of them aslant through the shoulder.]  
TAKETOKI. Traitors!

SCENE XXXIV. A camp.

[A heavy morning mist. A war gong, a trumpet, a war cry far away like a tidal wave.

Spears are laid low and horses run amuck. Floods of spears, arrows, and pennons borne by armoured warriors surge about, completely tattered.

Against the flow, Kunimaru on horseback is shouting with a threatening look.]

KUNIMARU. Let go! Let go!

[Noriyasu, also on horseback, is holding hard the bit of Kunimaru's horse.]

NORIYASU. Don't lose your head. To the castle for the present, my young lord!

KUNIMARU. Nay! Let go! This is surely Taketoki's scheme! If we fly, leaving the matter as it is, we'll be stigmatized as traitors.

NORIYASU. Hark! My young lord! If we die to no purpose, the rights and wrongs of the matter can never be judged!

[Taketoki's retainers surround these two.]  
RETAINERS. Traitors!

RETAINERS. Murderers of our senior lord!

[Noriyasu draws his sword and pounds with its back at the rear of Kunimaru's horse.

Kunimaru's horse springs to a gallop.

Sweeping away the retainers of Taketoki, Noriyasu follows Kunimaru.]  
TAKETOKI. Pay no attention to the small game! Our enemy is Noriyasu!

[Thundering at the highest pitch of his voice, Taketoki gallops on the wings of the wind.]

TAKETOKI. Where's Noriyasu? Where is he?

RETAINER. By a hair's breadth...

TAKETOKI. Did he flee?

RETAINER. Yes, towards the castle with our young lord.

TAKETOKI [changes colour]. What! Towards the castle, protecting our young lord?!

[Taketoki screams in consternation.]

TAKETOKI. Damn it! Yoshiaki Miki, who is guarding the castle, ... if he lets them in the castle... No, no excuse to make to our senior lord if we allow such wicked men in our castle. Follow me! Follow me!

[Taketoki madly gives his horse a kick and begins to gallop. A party of horsemen follow him.]

SCENE XXXV. A field enveloped in fog.

[Noriyasu and Kunimaru keep galloping.

Taketoki and his retainers, seven or eight, follow them.]

SCENE XXXVI. Kumote Forest.

[Noriyasu and Kunimaru dash into the forest.

Taketoki and his retainers also dash into the forest in pursuit of them.]

SCENE XXXVII. Inside the forest.

[Noriyasu and Kunimaru fleeing.

Taketoki and a party of his retainers pursuing.

The desperate look of fleeing Noriyasu and Kunimaru.  
The pursuing Taketoki looks like a furious demon.  
Both parties, hunter and hunted, continue at a gallop.]

SCENE XXXVIII. The edge of the forest.

[Noriyasu and Kunimaru dashing out of the forest.

After a while, Taketoki and his retainers dashing out after them.]  
TAKETOKI. Damn it!

[Turning pale, Taketoki reins up his horse.

Several horsemen after him pull up their horses in rapid succession.]

SCENE XXXIX. Kumonosu Castle. A road leading to the front gate.

[Noriyasu and Kunimaru, galloping up a road.]

SCENE XL. The edge of the forest.

[Taketoki glares fiercely at them, with bloodshot eyes.]

SCENE XLI. Kumonosu Castle. The front gate.

[Noriyasu and Kunimaru, galloping to the gate.

~~They swing down from their saddles and hasten to the door of the gate.]~~

NORIYASU ~~Freezes knocking at the door.]~~ If you please, I must speak to General Mikii! Our senior lord, on his way to the punitive encounter against Inui, died an ignominious death, due to the treason of Taketoki Washizu... I, Noriyasu Odagura, accompanying our young lord, Kunimaru, cut our way through the enemy and managed to return to the castle... I say, open the door immediately!

[The interior of the castle is silent.]  
NORIYASU [shouts]. If you please, General Mikii! Taketoki's pur-

suing force are approaching! Open the door at once!  
[Everything is hushed and deadly still in the castle.]

NORIYASU ~~Evidently knocks at the door, losing patience.]~~ Open the door!! Open the door!!

[A whiz.

With a keen, whizzing sound, an arrow pierces the ground close to Noriyasu's feet.

Noriyasu and Kunimaru, thunderstruck.]

SCENE XLII. The edge of the forest.

[Taketoki and his retainers, standing in their saddles, look closely at Noriyasu and Kunimaru with curiosity, shading their eyes with their hands.]

SCENE XLIII. The front gate.

[A shower of arrows from the two towers pour down on shouting Noriyasu and Kunimaru.]

SCENE XLIV. The edge of the forest.

[Taketoki and his retainers are stunned at the unexpected sight.]

SCENE XLV. The front gate.

[Noriyasu and Kunimaru, warding off a shower of arrows with their swords, jump on their horses and retreat.]

SCENE XLVI. The edge of the forest.

[Taketoki's retainers, excited, prepare to chase them.]  
TAKETOKI. Wait!

[Taketoki dissuades them.]

## SCENE XLVII. The front gate.

[Noriyasu and Kunimaru, galloping back, scarcely have looked at Taketoki and his retainers in the distance when they change their direction and gallop towards the mountain at one side.]

## SCENE XLVIII. On the edge of the forest.

[Taketoki's impatient retainers.]

RETAINER. My lord, let's pursue them!

TAKETOKI. Wait, wait a second! We can't take action without knowing Yoshiaki's real intention. If he intends to remain in the castle after our senior lord's death, Yoshiaki Miki himself is our present enemy.

[Taketoki glares at the castle with resentment.]

## SCENE XLIX. Kumonosu Castle. A panoramic view.

[All is hushed and still around the castle, which is, in its architecture, of the "Black Style."]

## SCENE L. The edge of the forest.

[Taketoki, biting his lips, is glaring at the castle. Clatter of hoofs.

Taketoki and his retainers turn, fully alert, towards the sound. One of his retainers dashes out of the forest, galloping.]

RETAINER. My lord! Here's a message from our lady.

TAKETOKI. What is it?

RETAINER. If General Miki does not open the door of the castle, proceed with the hearse of our senior lord, and...

TAKETOKI. Hmm! [He nods vigorously and looks up at the castle again.]

## SCENE LI. Kumonosu Castle. A panoramic view.

[The castle, still hushed and silent, and Taketoki's retainers, lined up in front of the castle.

Holding their spears, arrows, and pennons low, they all reverently wait in line and guard the hearse covered with white silk, which several of them bear on their shoulders.

Taketoki, at the head of the party, spurs his horse and gallops towards the castle.]

## SCENE LII. Kumonosu Castle. The front gate.

[Taketoki dashes in, pulls up his horse and thunders to the castle at the highest pitch of his voice.]

TAKETOKI. Open the door!! The return of our lord!! Open the door! I, Taketoki Washizu, enter the castle, guarding the hearse of our lord!!

[After this shout, he turns back his horse.]

## SCENE LIII. Kumonosu Castle. A panoramic view.

[Taketoki, having turned around, stands before lines of his soldiers, and gives an order to proceed, waving his hand. The files of soldiers, reverently moving.]

## SCENE LIV. The front gate.

[Silence.]

## SCENE LV. The road leading to the front gate.

[Taketoki proceeding in silence, and the files of soldiers after him, guarding the hearse.]

## SCENE LVI. The front gate.

[Silence.]

## SCENE LVII. The road leading to the front gate.

[Taketoki, proceeding, and the hearse, proceeding.  
Fearing that they may be shot by arrows... a succession of facial expressions of soldiers filled with strain.]

## SCENE LVIII. The front gate.

[Silence.]

## SCENE LIX. The road leading to the front gate.

[Taketoki, proceeding, and the hearse, proceeding.  
The files of soldiers approach the front gate reverently in an extremely strained atmosphere.  
At that very moment...]

## SCENE LX. The front gate.

[The door silently opens.

Yoshiaki on horseback dashes out.

Taketoki pulls up his horse with a start.

Yoshiaki gallops his horse and stops just in front of him.  
They stare fixedly at each other.

— A pause —

After a little pause, changing the direction of his horse, Yoshiaki rides side by side with Taketoki.  
They pass together through the front gate in silence.]

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## SCENE LXI. Inside the castle.

[The men in the castle kneeling to meet the hearse, Taketoki and Yoshiaki ride in silence through them.

Taketoki casts a glance at the tearful waiting women, who are kneeling in a group.]

TAKETOKI. Where's our lady?

YOSHIAKI. She killed herself.

TAKETOKI. ?!

YOSHIAKI. She told me that she couldn't stand to witness the enemy being given this castle before her very eyes.

TAKETOKI. ...

[They are both silent for a while.

Yoshiaki suddenly speaks.]

YOSHIAKI. The evil spirit of Kumote Forest made a good guess, didn't she!

TAKETOKI [with glaring eyes]. ...

YOSHIAKI [feigning ignorance, with his face to the front]. After the death of our lord, Inui will surely attack this castle. A person of considerable strength... anyhow, only your strength would be able to defend this castle against the enemy... With this reason, I'm going to appeal to the members at the main conference.

TAKETOKI. ...

[Again they are both silent for a while.

This time Taketoki begins to talk.]

YOSHIAKI [checking Taketoki with his eyes]. Let us talk it over at our leisure.

## SCENE LXII. Kumonosu Castle. The front tower.

[Washizu's retainers, several of them, are looking down over forests and green rice fields which stretch far away under their eyes.]

RETAINER. Where's the North Castle?

RETAINER. At the foot of that mountain... there.

RETAINER. Well, looking down on it from here, it's really small, isn't it?

RETAINER. Yes, greatness certainly is relative. We are fortunate! Really fortunate!

RETAINER. On top of that, if a princely heir is born in our household, nothing will give us greater joy.

SCENE LXIII. Inside the castle. A room in the inner castle.

[The workmanship of the room, its furniture, and the garments of Taketoki and Asaji, who are sitting there, are noticeably better. Only their expressions are not changed.]

But a gloomier atmosphere than before hangs over the room.

At length, Asaji speaks.] [Asaji kneels while Washizu paces] ASAJI. Then...it's decided...are you going to hand over this castle to the son of General Miki?

[Taketoki studies Asaji's expressionless face and speaks.]

TAKETOKI. At the main conference Miki didn't concede a point, recommending me as the lord of this castle. I owe what I am to his constant friendship. I must reward him for his friendship.

ASAJI. I do not think so.

TAKETOKI. ?

ASAJI. It is not because of his friendship that he recommended you... It was because of...you know it well.

TAKETOKI [embarrassed]. Don't talk like that...Yoshiaki is courageous. A man of resources...he is the worst enemy, but surely the best ally. If I decide on his son as my successor, he will be willing to work for me. Now, understand me! Tonight's banquet is an important occasion to announce my successor. Extend the utmost courtesy both to Yoshiaki and his son.

ASAJI. I...I did not stain these hands of mine with blood in his son's favour. [Raises hands slightly]

TAKETOKI. [stares at Asaji, in astonishment]. My reign is only for a single generation...and then Yoshiaki's descendants will

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succeed me. If I believe the prophecy which we heard in Kumoto Forest...it cannot be helped, you know.

ASAJI. I hate it.

TAKETOKI. But...look, we have no child, and some day we must decide upon our heir.

ASAJI [calmly]. I...I'm expecting a child.

[Taketoki, thunderstruck.]

TAKETOKI. What? You, expecting a child?!

ASAJI. Yes.

[Taketoki's face flushes in an instant.]

A violent whirlwind rages in his head.

~~With his striking eyes set, he begins to walk up and down the length of the room restlessly.]~~

SCENE LXIV. The North Castle. The courtyard.

[A runaway horse, raging.]

Yoshiaki's retainers, running after it.

Yoshiaki and Yoshiteru come out on the open corridor.]

YOSHIAKI. You fools! What's the matter!

[One of his retainers runs to them, and feeling embarrassed, kneels.]

RETAINER. Today Asakaze, who is ordinarily very tame, is beyond our control. We tried to put a saddle on him, but in his rage he tore off the bridle and got free.

YOSHITERU. Father, this is a bad omen. Please, give up today's attendance at the castle.

YOSHIAKI. Certainly not! We are guests of honour for today's banquet. To fail to attend is out of the question.

[Yoshiaki enters the castle.]

Yoshiteru follows him.]

SCENE LXV. Inside the North Castle.

[Yoshiteru, running after his father closely, speaks.]



YOSHITERU. Father, as I already told you, I am much obliged for your kind arrangement, but....

YOSHIAKI. What objection do you have to it?

YOSHITERU. Oh, no objection... but, I just can't believe such a prophecy of an evil spirit... Absurd!

YOSHIAKI. Absurd? I saw it myself. And, the prophecy came true in Washizu's case. In my case, too. Tonight....

YOSHITERU. Such an expectation itself shows that you are bewitched. Bewitched by an evil spirit, you build up the events as she told you, with your own hands, and then you believe in the fulfillment of her prophecy... I doubt your sanity.

YOSHIAKI. If you can't believe it, you don't have to,.... but.... Washizu's proposal that he wants you as his successor is neither a dream nor an illusion.

YOSHITERU. ....

YOSHIAKI. Listen! You are to have the castle for your own, without shedding blood and strewing the ground with corpses. In this world you can never be more fortunate. I question your own sanity in refusing such a proposal!

YOSHITERU. ....

SCENE LXVI. The front gate of the North Castle.

[A train of attendants are ready for departure. Two saddled horses are gorgeously attired.

One of them, Asakaze, is still in a rage and is giving trouble to the retainers who are holding him.]

SCENE LXVII. The same (at night).

[Making a bonfire, retainers guard the gate.

One of them takes off his leggings and presses his hand on his leg. He talks.]

RETAINER. Narrowly escaped breaking the bone of my leg! Fie

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on Asakaze, what made him so unruly? Thanks to him I couldn't accompany my lord.

[One of his fellows teases him.]

RETAINER. You mean "Thanks to him I missed a treat of sake at the castle."

[They all hoot at him.

The clattering of a horse's hoofs.

They all strain their ears.

The clattering of hoofs rapidly approaches them.

The retainers stand up in haste and surround the gate with their spears ready.]

RETAINER. Who's there?

[Asakaze pops up out of the darkness.

They are all appalled.

Asakaze, surrounded by them, gives a mournful neigh.]

SCENE LXVIII. Kumonosu Castle. The grand hall.

[One of the generals is dancing, accompanied by the song of others, who sit on both sides of the hall.]

SONG.

In the meantime, the horrifying voice of a spirit of the dead,  
Shaking rivers and mountains,  
Reverberating over the sea and under the earth,

Violently stirring trees and green hills in this world.

[One of the generals talks to his companion, who sits next to him.]

GENERAL. Well, I wonder what happened to General Miki.

[Two seats of honour are unoccupied.

Taketoki, who sits at the front seat, is gulping down sake, waited upon by Asaji, and while drinking, he often glances at those seats, with an extremely pale face.]

ONE OF GENERALS.

Our lord is also worrying about his absence. Why the absence of our guests of honour? It's unbecoming to General Miki....

SONG. Mark our words, a spirit of the dead.

In olden times there was also such an instance.  
The devil who served a traitor called Chikata was there.  
He had scarcely deserted Chikata before he met with his own  
destruction.  
It was Heaven's justice on him for having revolted against  
kingship.

[This song tingles in Taketoki's ears.

Taketoki furiously waves his hand and shouts.]

TAKETOKI. Damn it! No more of your dance, please.

[All those present become hushed in astonishment.

Taketoki, with his bloodshot eyes, gets another glimpse of those vacant  
seats.

His face is extraordinarily contorted.

In the same seat, which was unoccupied a moment ago, sits Yoshiaki  
Miki, with the stamp of death on his face.

Taketoki grabs at his sword and shouts, beside himself with rage.]

TAKETOKI. You devil, Yoshiaki!

[Generals, in their astonishment, stare at Taketoki.

Taketoki screams breathlessly.]

TAKETOKI. You insolent fellow! Away with you! Away!

[All the generals stand up simultaneously.]

ASAJI [trying to keep them quiet]. If you please, stay quiet. He has  
drunk too much... My lord! My lord!

[She tugs Taketoki by the sleeve.

Taketoki stares at Asaji with a confused look and turns his eyes back  
where they were.

Yoshiaki's seat is still unoccupied.  
Taketoki, at his wits' end.]

ASAJI [smiling a forced smile]. Of late, our lord becomes like this  
when drinking sake too much, ho, ho, ho. I'm afraid the violent end  
of our former lord has really been a great strain on him.

[Taketoki wipes greasy sweat off his forehead, and talks.]

TAKETOKI. Well, I'm dead drunk...

[He looks around at those present, who are hushed and still.]

TAKETOKI. How about some merrymaking? At this congratulatory  
banquet...

ASAJI. Even so, this delay of General Miki... It's rumoured abroad  
that a spy under Inui's command has secretly sneaked into our  
country. He has not had an accident on his way, I hope.

[Taketoki, with gloomy eyes, stares at the vacant seats.

Again, in the seat which had been unoccupied, sits Yoshiaki, with the  
same stamp of death on his face.]

TAKETOKI [beside himself]. Damn it! Why appear again! If you  
are so afraid of me, go ahead, draw your sword against me! I'll  
kill you again!

[Generals, startled, exchange glances.

Taketoki slashes the vacant seat with his sword.]

ASAJI [screams]. My lord! My lord!

[Taketoki, who was brandishing his sword in a rage, suddenly comes  
to himself at Asaji's scream, and stares at the unoccupied seat,  
stupefied, still standing.]

ASAJI [to generals, who stare at Taketoki, horror-struck]. Please,  
don't be offended. The frenzy of our lord will be gone when he be-  
comes sober. I am sorry that your pleasure was spoiled by an un-  
fortunate disturbance. Tonight I wish you to leave the castle.

[They leave saying farewells hurriedly.

Taketoki and Asaji remain alone in the big hall.]

ASAJI. You behaved very well... the man who is determined to con-  
quer the whole world in the future, he was beside himself, frightened  
at a ghost! How absurd!

[Looking in one direction, she exclaims in a <sup>frankly</sup> ~~horrible~~ tone.]

ASAJI. Who's there?!

[Before they know it, an armed soldier is in waiting at the corner  
of the hall.

He bows, and silently comes close to them.

He presents a bundle covered with white cloth, which he was holding  
under his arm.]

SOLDIER. As for General Miki, I surely did...

[He opens the bundle, and shows its inside to Taketoki.  
Taketoki turns away his face.]

TAKETOKI. That'll do. Away!

ASAJI [casting a sidelong glance at it]. You, of all people, . . . You must still ask him an important question . . .

TAKETOKI [coming to himself with a start]. What of his son?

SOLDIER. We gave him a heavy blow, but he fled, clinging to his horse.

TAKETOKI. What, he fled?

SOLDIER. I have no words to apologize for it.

[Taketoki steals a glance at Asaji.

Asaji, with the same expressionless look like a Nô-mask, looks hard at the soldier, then quietly leaves the hall.

Taketoki gazes after her, glares at the soldier who is throwing himself at Taketoki's feet, and thrusts his sword through the soldier. The soldier falls flat, his eyes filled with hatred.]

SCENE LXIX. Kumonosu Castle. A panoramic view.

[The sky is filled with dark clouds, blowing in whirls, and a violent wind is howling against the castle.]

SCENE LXX. Inside the front tower.

[Soldiers are helping themselves to sake, and talking in a whispering tone.]

A. Goodness, how hard it blows!

B. It feels as if the foundation stone of this castle is shaking.

C. If you mean the foundation of Kumonosu Castle, it seems that it has already been shaking without the wind.

D. The generals of the castles and forts who used to come to pay their respects to our lord every day until now . . . they have been quite negligent of late . . .

A. Keep clear of the devil, you know. Already two generals were

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forced to kill themselves, because of our lord's suspicion.

B. We can't believe that General Miki was killed by the spy under Inui's command, can we?

C. No, indeed. They say that Yoshiteru, the eldest son of General Miki, is staying with Inui. It's not at all likely that he remains with his own father's enemy.

D. Noriyasu Odagura and our young lord, Kunimaru, are also staying with Inui, they say.

A. I'm anxious to know how the matter will end . . . Anyhow, now we can't feel safe in this castle, even though it was impregnable before.

B. Let me tell you the story which I heard from the man at the water tower; the other day he saw a crowd of rats swimming across the moat and fleeing from the castle.

C. From olden times, people say that when a house burns, rats abandon it before anyone else.

[They become silent.

The sound of the wind, blowing violently outside.]

SCENE LXXI. Inside the castle. Taketoki's room.

Shaking hand partially opens wooden door. An old waiting woman kneels outside the door. Inside we see Washizu seated alone, looking blankly into space with restless eyes. The rage of the wind blowing like a groan in the distance.

TAKETOKI. What's the matter? And what of our lady? How is she? Well?

AN OLD WAITING WOMAN [She is kneeling before him without uttering a word.]

TAKETOKI [cries aloud]. You, answer me!! Why, why do you

remain silent?

AN OLD WAITING WOMAN [with her head drooping down]. I have no words to tell you...

[Taketoki, frightened, stares at the old waiting woman, and holds an elbow rest tightly.]

AN OLD WAITING WOMAN. Our lady gave birth to... a dead child.

TAKETOKI. What! A dead child?!

AN OLD WAITING WOMAN. And to make matters worse, it has been dead several days in the womb, and our lady herself cannot be free from danger.

TAKETOKI. ...

[A gust of wind shaking the castle violently. Goes back into his room and kneels before Tsuzuki's helmet. Screams in a wailing tone.]

TAKETOKI. You fool! Fool! Fool!

[Flurried footsteps.]

RETAINER. Our lord! If you please, our lord!

[Taketoki comes to himself and dashes into the corridor.]

SCENE LXXII. The corridor.

[One of his retainers runs close to Taketoki.]

RETAINER. Our lord! Here's a messenger from the First Fort.

TAKETOKI. From the First Fort?!

[Taketoki runs.]

SCENE LXXIII. ~~A room in the castle~~ Outside.

[A violent wind. Taketoki enters, running down the open corridor. He looks down on the messenger, who kneels before him under the steps.]

TAKETOKI. What's the matter?

MESSENGER. Inui's troops have surged into our country across the

border and besieged the First Fort.

TAKETOKI. Oh, no!

MESSENGER. The leading general is Noriyasu Odagura... And accompanying young lord Kunimaru, they plead that they are going to avenge their former lord.

\* \* \*

THE SECOND MESSENGER. The Second Fort was also besieged, and the general of the attacking force is Yoshiteru Miki...

\* \* \*

THE THIRD MESSENGER. The First Fort and the Second Fort, they both went over to the enemy, and in cooperation with the enemy, they are now surging forward to the Third Fort.

SCENE LXXIV. The grand hall of the castle.

[Taketoki restlessly walking up and down, flanked by his generals in attendance.

They are all gloomily silent.

Taketoki, glaring around impatiently, suddenly stops and berates them.]

TAKETOKI. [fools!] We have already been discussing the matter for some time. Does no one have a scheme to meet this emergency? [They are all silent.]

TAKETOKI. I won't ask you any more! There's no sense in asking the schemes of such fools, who have turned pale and cannot speak a word, frightened at this event!!

[Taketoki again walks up and down restlessly. Lightning and thunder.

With a start, Taketoki stops walking and stares fixedly into space. He suddenly begins to run.]

\*All one messenger.

TAKETOKI. Get my horse ready!

SCENE LXXV. The front gate.

[Lightning and thunder. Violent wind and rain.  
The main door swings open.  
Spurring his horse on, Taketoki dashes out of the door like a gust of wind.]

SCENE LXXVI. Kumote Forest.

[Lightning and thunder.  
In the midst of lightning and thunder, Taketoki continues galloping. He gallops, thundering at the highest pitch of his voice.]  
TAKETOKI. You evil spirit, come out!  
[Horrible laughter answers him.]  
TAKETOKI. Come out! Come out to meet me!  
[Horrible laughter reverberating throughout the forest.]

SCENE LXXVII. Kumote Forest. An old battleground.

[Taketoki's galloping horse suddenly stops.  
Ahead of him is the heap of skeletons in armour.  
It is covered all over with weeds which are now in full blood-coloured bloom.]  
TAKETOKI [shouts]. Come out to meet me, you evil spirit!! I have a question to ask you!! Come out!  
[On the heap of skeletons appears an old woman with dishevelled gray hair.]  
OLD WOMAN. Oh, you, Lord of Kumonosu Castle.  
TAKETOKI. At last you have appeared, evil spirit. Answer me clearly. Is it true that Yoshiaki's son will be Lord of Kumonosu Castle?  
OLD WOMAN. Oh, you finally came to the last step of delusion. ~~How~~

~~delighted, delighted~~ Congratulations!

TAKETOKI. Damn it! Why not a word? If you have the power of prophecy, tell me Taketoki's fortune in war.

OLD WOMAN [laughs gloomily in horrible tone]. Be calm about it... you won't lose the battle, unless Kumote Forest advances towards Kumonosu Castle.

TAKETOKI [surprised with joy]. What? Unless this forest advances? It cannot be, I'm sure. Ha, ha, ha... then you mean I will never lose the battle?!

[The old woman disappears with a horrible laughter, and amid the heap of armour and skeletons appear blood-stained soldiers one by one.]  
PHANTOM 1. Ha, ha, ha, ha. If you live a demon-like life, be devilish to your heart's content.

TAKETOKI. All right! Noriyasu, Kunimaru, Yoshiaki's little monk and Inui's fellows, I'll kill all of them.

PHANTOM 2. Ha, ha, ha, ha. If you build up the heap of corpses, make it as big as your heart's content.

TAKETOKI. All right!! On these skeletons I'll build up the new heap of corpses!!

PHANTOM 3. Ha, ha, ha, ha. If you spill blood, let it flow to your heart's content.

TAKETOKI. All right!! I'll fill the moat of the castle with a sea of blood.

[Taketoki, with his face crimson, stands on the saddle, and screeches like one possessed.]

TAKETOKI. Ha, ha, ha, ha. Come, Noriyasu. Join Inui, if you dare. Kunimaru, Yoshiteru... Well, unite even with the First Fort and the Second Fort, if you dare. Collect thousands, tens of thousands of soldiers, or as many as they can, and come to Kumonosu Castle!!

SCENE LXXVIII. The field.

[Noriyasu's troops advance, filling the field.

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The troops are disposed in a battle formation shaped like the scales of a fish.

The clattering sound of armour and hoofs are heard like the roar of the sea.

Clouds of dust whirl up.

Flags flutter. Horses neigh.

The metal mountings of helmets and spearheads glitter in the sun. Noriyasu, Kunimaru, Yoshiteru and others go into the center of the battle array.

The camp—Noriyasu stares hard at Kumote Forest, which is just ahead of them, and looks back on the generals who wait on him.]  
NORIYASU. We lay out our battle formation like the wings of a

crane... Now, the only advantage of Kumote Forest is the roads which stretch like cobwebs. Don't take the roads where you will go astray. When you have once entered the forest, proceed through the trees straight ahead.

[The generals dash in all directions.

The formation of troops is shaped like the wings of a crane and they solemnly advance to the forest.]

#### SCENE LXXIX. The battle of Kumote Forest.

[Taketoki's troops, who have set nets and lain down in the labyrinth of the forest, are easily demolished by Noriyasu's troops, who understand their tactics and have silently advanced through the trees.]

Note: We only mention in summary how the battle is fought, since we must change it in many ways, depending on the actual scenes.

#### SCENE LXXX. Kumonosu Castle. Inside the castle.

[Taketoki and generals.]

TAKETOKI. What!! Our troops waiting in ambush in Kumote Forest have fled back?!

ONE OF THE GENERALS. Yes, my lord.

TAKETOKI. You great fools!! Even though you stationed soldiers in ambush in that stronghold, do you mean that you withdrew them without taking even one fling at the enemy?!

ONE OF THE GENERALS. Yes. The enemy is Noriyasu Odagura, who is familiar with the place, and he cannot be tricked.

TAKETOKI. Hmm!

[Grinding his teeth, Taketoki furiously stands up and runs up the stairs leading to the tower. Other generals follow him.]

#### SCENE LXXXI. The tower.

[Taketoki and his generals come up.

They look down.]

#### SCENE LXXXII. Kumote Forest. A panoramic view.

[The edge of the forest is lilled to overflowing with Noriyasu's troops.]

#### SCENE LXXXIII. The tower.

[Taketoki, who was looking down steadily, suddenly breaks out into fits of laughter.

TAKETOKI. Ha, ha, ha, ha... Ha, ha, ha, ha.

[The generals, shocked at the news of their defeated troops and at the sight of the high morale of Noriyasu's troops, which they see below, all stare at Taketoki with a shudder.]

TAKETOKI. Ha, ha, ha, ha... Ha, ha, ha, ha. I, of all people...

Ha, ha, ha, ha.

[Taketoki keeps laughing.

The generals stare in blank amazement.

At last Taketoki stops laughing and looks about the generals. They all look as pale as death.

Taketoki looks down towards the castle interior.]

SCENE LXXXIV. Inside the castle. A panoramic view.

[Soldiers fill the courtyard looking as pale as death and gazing at the tower with frightened eyes.]

SCENE LXXXV. The tower.

[Taketoki looks about at those soldiers and generals, and gives a broad grin.]

He shouts at the highest pitch of his voice.]

TAKETOKI. Every one of you. Hark!! The battle is won by the one who wins the final victory!! The other issues of the battle are not important at all!! Don't be frightened!! Believe me, this is Washizu!! I will never lose the battle!!

[The Generals are stunned.]

SCENE LXXXVI. Inside the castle. A panoramic view.

[The soldiers are astir, not convinced by Taketoki's words.]

SCENE LXXXVII. The tower.

[Taketoki looks about at the soldiers and generals, and in an extraordinarily strong tone he begins to talk like one possessed.]

TAKETOKI. If you can't believe me, I shall reason with you. It was when I was the head of the First Fort. On my way to the castle after having defeated Fujimaki's rebel troops united with Inui's, I saw an evil spirit in Kumote Forest. The evil spirit prophesied, "You are the Lord of the North Castle from this evening, and the Lord of Kumonosu Castle shortly." Behold, I am! That prophecy came true in the case of my fate, not a bit different. Now, today... I galloped my horse to Kumote Forest, and asked the evil spirit about my fortune in war. Ha, ha, ha, ha. Congratulate yourselves!! I, I will never lose the battle, even if the sky crumbles

*Kumonosuji (Throne of Blood)*

and the earth cracks!! According to the evil spirit, unless that Kumote Forest moves and advances on to this castle, I will never lose a battle. Now, every one of you... Well? Do you think that the forest moves!!

SCENE I.LXXXVIII. Inside the castle.

[Soldiers break into laughter.]

SCENE LXXXIX. The tower.

TAKETOKI. All right!! Raise your weapons, if you believe my fortune in war!!

SCENE XC. Inside the castle. A panoramic view.

[Whoop!!]

Soldiers raise spears, flourish arrows, and shout war cries.]

SCENE XCI. The tower.

[Taketoki answers them with a smile.]

With a contemptuous look at the generals, who are at their wits' end, he turns his eyes and looks down at Kumote Forest.]

SCENE XCII. Kumote Forest. A panoramic view.

[Noriyasu's troops are ~~deadly-silent in the forest.~~  
maneuvering into position.]

SCENE XCIII. The tower (night).

[The outside viewed through observation holes is pitch black and a hush has fallen over the darkness.  
Guards are staring at the darkness.]

GUARD. Can't see a thing. The fellows in the attacking force... even without making bonfires... I wonder what they are doing?

[The sound of axes resounding throughout the forest. ~~Flapping of bird-wings, frightened screaming of women.~~

GUARD. What? What's up?

[One of the soldiers, who are sleeping with their armour on, talks in a sleepy tone.]

SOLDIER. Since they can't attack the castle, they have begun to make a stockade, I presume.

SCENE XCIV. The grand hall.

[Making bonfires in the open corridor and with the doors wide open, Taketoki and several generals are drinking sake.

All of them have their armour and shoes on, with carefully worn leggings and footgear.]

TAKETOKI. Ha, ha, ha, ha... Even Noriyasu won't be able to take measures against the noted architecture of this castle, "the black style." The attacking force cannot get even a glimpse of the inside of the castle... on the other hand, from the castle they are visible to our eyes. If they dare come with all their strength, we will draw them as near as we can and shower arrows upon them. That'll do it. [Some kind of strange noise approaches. All of those present are startled.]

SCENE XCV. Inside the castle. The courtyard.

[Strange noises approach nearer and nearer.

Soldiers, who had been sleeping at their posts, prepared for tomorrow's battle, are aroused and raise a clamour.]

SOLDIER. What's the matter!?

SOLDIER. Is it the attacking force!?

SOLDIER. Is it a night attack!?

SCENE XCVI. The grand hall.

[All the generals stand up simultaneously.

Taketoki also stands up straight.

With terrific flapping and ominous cries, a flock of wild birds, attracted by the light, fly into the room. They fly against the ceiling and wooden door, and fall thick and fast upon the floor.

The generals sense something ominous, and stand upright.

Taketoki looks at them and laughs uproariously.]

TAKETOKI. Ha, ha, ha, ha. Why do you turn pale, you stupid generals. Why not regard this as a good omen? What a shame that you are ready to run away at the sight of a good omen that a large enemy force will fall into our hands. [The generals are silent, biting their lips.]

\* \* \*

[The dawn.

The bonfires are out and a morning mist hovers in the dawn.

Taketoki is alone dozing, while leaning on an elbow rest.

Women's excited voices from the inner part of the castle.]

WOMEN. Oh, my lady... My lady...

[With a start, Taketoki strains his ears.

The interior is hushed and still.

Taketoki, driven by anxiety, stands up.]

SCENE XCVII. The inner part of the castle. The corridor.

[Maids and an old waiting woman gather in a group and look to one direction with frightened eyes.

Taketoki briskly enters.

The maids and the old waiting woman sit in haste.

Taketoki is transfixed at the sight in the room, as if chilled to the bones.]



## SCENE XCVIII. Asaji's room.

[The light from the candlestand is dimly flickering in the twilight.

Asaji squats at the corner of the room, away from her sleeping mattress, and repeatedly makes a gesture of washing her hands.

Her expressionless face like a Nô-mask is emaciated with the torment of serious illness and now assumes a ghostly visage.

The colour of her eyes is already abnormal.

While making a gesture of washing her hands, she murmurs in delirium.]

ASAJI. Cannot be removed... There, horrible blood stain. With all my washing, why doesn't it disappear, I wonder. Oh, no, still smells of blood... Oh, these hands, why can they not be wiped clean!

[Taketoki, struck with horror, stares at Asaji, but being unable to stand it any more, runs close to her.]

TAKETOKI. Asaji!! Asaji!!

[Asaji is deaf to his screaming voice.

She continues her gesture of washing her hands and babbles out in delirium.]

ASAJI. Why is it that... Oh, this bloodstain... too strongly stained on my hands to be removed. For all my washing, for all my washing... reeks of blood... this disgusting blood stain...

[Taketoki is frightened out of his wits; trembling all over and staring at Asaji, he is rooted to the ground.

Flurried cries of the mob in the distance.

Taketoki comes to himself and runs out.]

## SCENE XCIX. Inside the castle. The courtyard.

[Soldiers, who have fallen into utter confusion, are screaming, beside themselves, and running pell-mell.

Taketoki dashes out.]

TAKETOKI. You great fools! How dare you become upset and make such a noise at this crucial moment! Be quiet! Be quiet!

[One of the soldiers talks, with his face drawn.]

SOLDIER. My lord! The forest... the forest... That Kumote Forest...

[He points to the direction of the front gate, and gasps for breath.

Taketoki becomes irritated.]

TAKETOKI. Kumote Forest... what do you mean?!

[One of the soldiers talks, trembling all over.]

SOLDIER. The forest has begun to move,... and is moving towards our castle.

[Taketoki is shocked for a moment.]

TAKETOKI. What nonsense... must be an illusion imagined by fools like you... It's hardly possible that the forest moves.

[He violently pushes the soldiers away and runs up the tower.]

## SCENE C. The tower.

[Taketoki comes running up the tower.

He shoves aside the guard, who is frightened and rooted to the ground like an idiot, and he draws his face near an observation hole with a jerk.

Taketoki's face suddenly turns pale, thunderstruck.]

## SCENE CI. Outside the castle. A panoramic view.

[The forest is slowly moving through the mist which hangs over the morning twilight.

And it is advancing towards the castle, slowly and steadily.]

## SCENE CII. The tower.

[Taketoki is utterly at his wits' end.

Over his face appears an indescribable horror.

Like a beast in danger, Taketoki staggers, hesitates, and then, trying to run away from the tower, he gets his feet on the stairs.

Then he looks down and is petrified.]

**SCENE CIII. Inside the castle. The courtyard.**

[Soldiers have gathered full to overflowing and are glaring up at Taketoki.]

**SCENE CIV. The tower and the courtyard.**

[Taketoki loses his self-control. Soon he is barely able to put up a good front.]

**TAKETOKI.** What... what's the matter!! Don't desert your posts!! [Not a single soldier answers him, and they all stare fixedly at Taketoki.]

Taketoki glares at them, with distraught eyes, and screams.]

**TAKETOKI.** To your posts! Return to your posts!!

[The soldiers are silent.]

Deprived of words, Taketoki turns pale.

A whiz!

An arrow whistles from somewhere and grazes Taketoki's armour.

Taketoki contorts his face with fear, and screams.]

**TAKETOKI.** You cowards! Oh, I guessed your game! After killing me, you are going to surrender to the enemy's camp, with my head as a present!!

[The soldiers are silent.]

A whiz!

Another arrow whistles and lodges in the wadded silk garment of his armour.

Taketoki is completely distraught.]

**TAKETOKI.** You dogs!! Traitors!! It's a high treason to murder your lord!!

[A shrill voice comes in a flash.]

**VOICE.** Who murdered our former lord?!

[A shower of arrows converge upon Taketoki.]

Taketoki hurries to run into the tower.

One of the generals shoots an arrow at him.

That arrow lodges in his back.

Taketoki falters.

A shower of arrows converge upon Taketoki.

One of them pierces Taketoki's head.

Taketoki, bristling with arrows like a hedgehog, falls headlong from the tower.]

**SCENE CV. Outside the castle.**

[The forest silently and steadily advances in the morning mist.

A gust of morning wind runs through and sweeps away the mist.

It reveals that the moving forest is none other than Noriyasu's troops with their large and small cavalry camouflaged by twigs and branches.

Noriyasu shouts to the whole troops.]

**NORIYASU.** Our attacking force can be seen from the castle!! Put large and small horse contingents before you, and shelter yourselves behind them. Conceal yourselves among the branches and don't expose yourselves to the danger of arrows!!

[The whole troops answer him and raise war cries.

The morning breeze sweeps by.

They solemnly advance.

The morning sun suddenly casts its first bright ray across Noriyasu's forces.]

**SCENE CVI. The ruins of a castle.**

[Reeds growing thick and rank over the moat.

A morning breeze running through those reeds.]

**CHORUS.** The attacking force were none other than the rustling reeds in the breeze.

The war cries were none other than a breeze in the pine tree.

[A sobbing pine tree rustles against the stone wall.]

CHORUS. The ruins show the fate of demonic men with treacherous desire.

Life is the same now as in ancient times.

[Moss-grown stone walls.

Water of the moat covered with green scum.

"The Ruins of Kumonosu Castle."

A decayed placard written as above.

Everything looks desolate.]

Note: There will be some changes in the songs at the beginning and end, and in the battle scenes, depending on actual locations.

## Notes

### Introduction

1. Susan Bassnett-McGuire, *Translation Studies* (London: Methuen, 1980), p. 1.

### Part I: History of Shakespeare Translation in Japan

1. I am greatly indebted for much of the information contained in this chapter to Toyoda Minoru's *Shakespeare in Japan* (Tokyo, 1939) and the special Shakespearean issue of *Eigo Seinen* (April, 1982), and many other reference works.
2. Toshiro Kawatake, *Nihon no Hamuretto (Hamlet in Japan)* (Tokyo: Nanso-sha, 1972), pp. 45-47.
3. Tanaka Masao has studied the soliloquy extensively and contends that it was rendered by Wirgman himself as a caricature. See Masao Tanaka, "The Japan Punch to Hamuretto no Dokuhaku" (*The Japan Punch and the Soliloquy of Hamlet*), *Kindai* (Kobe: Kobe University), No. 2 (1980), pp. 41-72.
4. Kawatake, *op. cit.*, pp. 73-81.
5. *Ibid.*
6. Emil Hausknecht, "Shakespeare in Japan," *Poet Lore*, Vol. 1 (1889), 466-470. Translated from *Shakspere Jahrbuch*, XXIV, by Mary Harned.
7. See Chapter 1, Part III, pp. 61-74.
8. This is a well-known episode cited in Kawatake's article on the fourth soliloquy of Hamlet in Japan. See Kawatake, *op. cit.*, pp. 106-110.
9. Kawatake, *op. cit.*, pp. 73-81.
10. Katsuhiko Takeda, "Toyama Shōichi no Hamuretto Yakuhō," (Translation of Hamlet by Shōichi Toyama), *Eigo Seinen*, CX, 8 (August, 1964), 554-555.
11. See Chapter 2, Part III, pp. 75-97.