

*A Kabuki Play by Kawatake Mokuami*

---

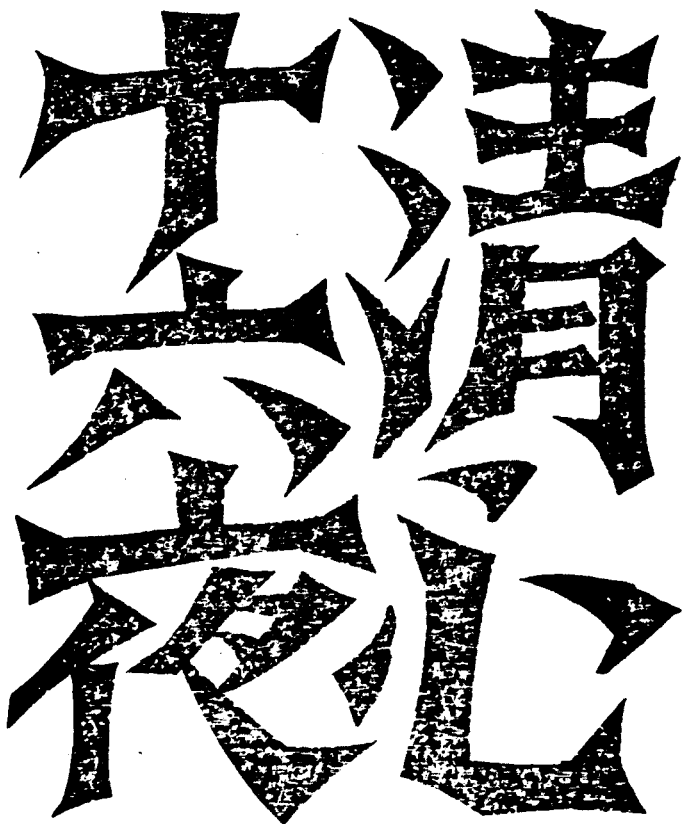
# THE LOVE OF IZAYOI & SEISHIN

---

*Translated by Frank T. Motofuji*

Act 1 Scene 1 to Act 4 Scene 2

pp. 9-95



Charles E. Tuttle Co.  
RUTLAND, VERMONT & TOKYO, JAPAN

1964

---

## CONTENTS

---

Introduction	9
Synopsis of History plays	21
ACT ONE • ACT THREE • ACT FIVE	
Cast of Characters	25
ACT TWO	27
Scene One • 27    Scene Two • 40	
Scene Three • 49    Scene Four • 55	
ACT FOUR	65
Scene One • 65    Scene Two • 73	
ACT SIX	97
Scene One • 97    Scene Two • 128	
ACT SEVEN	131
Scene One • 131    Scene Two • 139	
Scene Three • 169	

---

## INTRODUCTION

---

KAWATAKE MOKUAMI (1816–1893) was the last great playwright for the kabuki, the popular theater. He is credited with close to four hundred pieces, making him the most prolific writer in the history of the Japanese theater. Even discounting the fact that many of them were adaptations from older plays and that he had numerous disciples during his productive years to help him write the less important scenes, this is a staggering accomplishment. His plays are frequently given today, and *The Love of Izayoi and Seishin* is one of the most popular.

Mokuami's real name was Yoshimura Yoshisaburō. He was born in Edo (later Tokyo), where his family had lived for five generations. We know nothing definite about his schooling, but since his father was a pawnbroker, the boy must have been sent to a temple school for a rudimentary education, as he later kept the books. When he was sixteen, Mokuami was hired as a delivery boy by a book dealer. He became familiar with various types of popular literature, including the texts of puppet and kabuki plays, and errands frequently took him backstage into the three licensed kabuki theaters of Edo.

When Mokuami was eighteen, his father died. As the

eldest son, he had to manage the business, but being temperamentally unsuited for it he turned it over to his younger brother. He then drifted about until a dance teacher suggested that he become an apprentice to a playwright, a relative of hers. He took her advice and in 1835 became a disciple of Tsuruya Magotarō (1796-1852). Magotarō, who was not an especially gifted writer, was the adopted grandson of Tsuruya Namboku IV (1755-1829), the outstanding playwright before Mokuami.

Apprentice playwrights in the Edo period did not begin their training by writing. They were not much more than servants at the beginning. They then moved up to the position of scribe, excerpting and copying the dialogue of each character in a play for the actors assigned the roles, and making final copies of scripts. They were also expected to make preliminary sketches for theater billboards and handbills and to conduct preliminary rehearsals of minor scenes for the playwright, who was responsible for the staging of all his plays. If the apprentice carried out his duties satisfactorily, he was finally given the task of writing a scene under the supervision of the playwright. In 1840, after seven years with Magotarō, Mokuami was assigned an entire act.

In 1841 the three official theaters were ordered by the government to relocate in the outlying Asakusa district. This was part of a program of curbing extravagance among the townsmen and improving the moral climate. Mokuami became the chief playwright of one of the theaters and took the name of Kawatake Shinshichi II. (The first Shinshichi, who was active toward the end of the eighteenth century, produced little of importance.) In the following ten years, Mokuami did not distinguish himself in any way. This was due in part to the conservative policy of the management which favored the old (and mainly history) plays to original domestic dramas, which were Mokuami's forte. The first original domestic

## INTRODUCTION

play by Mokuami was produced in 1851. It was an unexpected success, and the delighted management gave him opportunities to write more. But it was not until 1854 that he finally came into his own.

In that year the actor Ichikawa Kodanji IV (1812-1866) came from Osaka for the season. This was the actor for whom Mokuami wrote his most famous plays, and the association was to last until the actor's death. Kodanji was not of distinguished lineage (pedigree is important in the kabuki). He was unimpressive physically and vocally, and although he had a wide range of roles (leading man, villain, female parts, and could dance), he was not noted for his dramatic ability until he worked with Mokuami, who also profited by the association. He preferred writing original plays involving thieves and other criminals, and in Kodanji he found his ideal interpreter. They collaborated on twenty-six domestic plays and five history plays. Kodanji's death left the Edo theater bereft of its star performer, but waiting in the wings were the young actors who were to become the leading figures in the kabuki of the Meiji era: Ichikawa Danjūrō IX (1838-1903), Onoe Kikugorō V (1844-1903), and Ichikawa Sadanji (1842-1904). Mokuami was to write for all of them.

The Tokugawa shogunate came to a turbulent end when Mokuami was in his prime. But because the kabuki was shackled by the regulation which prohibited depiction of any person or event of the Tokugawa period, almost none of the momentous events and changes confronting the nation was reflected in the traditional theater. It was left to the new drama from 1880 to come to grips with important political and social problems.

This is not to say that some minor internal reforms and external physical changes did not affect the kabuki. Theaters were built along western architectural lines; box-offices replaced theater teahouses as purveyors of tickets; and gaslight was installed. Writers from outside infil-

trated the kabuki with cries for reform. They had returned from abroad and were eager to remodel the kabuki in the western image. They advocated elimination of the erotic and vulgar, and insisted on the substitution of antiquarian authenticity for the numerous historical inaccuracies in the plays. Mokuami, as the leading playwright of the day, was their pet scapegoat. The prospectus of the Society for the Reformation of the Drama, which was issued in 1886, read in part, "... we believe that the ugliness or beauty of a play depends to a large extent upon the skill of the writer. Granting this, we observe not a single gentleman of learning among our playwrights. They all attract the lower classes merely by a facile patchwork of stale ideas."

Sensing the winds of change, Mokuami announced his retirement, and in 1881, at the age of sixty-five, completed what he believed would be his last play. In it, characteristically, all of the main characters were criminals. He gave the name of Kawatake Shinshichi to his leading disciple and took the name Mokuami. This name has a special significance. It comes from the expression *moto no Mokuami* ("back to the old Mokuami") and refers to a humble person who, like the original Mokuami, a blindman forced by circumstances to impersonate a feudal lord, returns voluntarily to his former state. But it was not possible for a writer of Mokuami's stature and ability to retire completely. Theater owners and actors persuaded him to continue writing.

Mokuami had been stung by the disparagement of the critics. He now wrote plays, characterized by historical accuracy, which were called "living history plays." They were so real they expired out of sheer dullness. Mokuami also wrote domestic plays with a contemporary background, but they were only superficially modern. The male characters wore their hair in the new western style, but in spirit they were similar to the characters in Mokuami's earlier plays. The theater-goers demanded plays

with scenes laid in the nostalgic past. It is with these that Mokuami achieved his greatest successes in the Meiji period. Kikugorō V, an actor whose style owed much to Kodanji IV, appeared in many of these. It was for him that Mokuami wrote his last piece before suffering the stroke that paralyzed his left side and led to his death on February 22, 1893. His death poem read:

*In vain it has waited  
For the flowering spring:  
The old plum tree  
That withers from one branch.*

*The Love of Izayoi and Seishin* is a domestic play, or, more accurately, a sub-class in the domestic play. The three main classifications in kabuki drama are the history play, the domestic play, and the dance narrative. In the history play the characters are of the warrior class. The language is formal and the acting is stylized. In the domestic plays the characters are from the townsman class, mainly well-to-do merchants. Chikamatsu (1653-1725) originated this style for the puppet theater. The dialogue is in the vernacular and the acting is realistic. The subclass in the domestic play is the "raw" domestic play. This label derives from the fact that the plays are populated by characters from the lowest strata of the plebeian class. Namboku IV pioneered this style and Mokuami brought it to perfection. *The Love of Izayoi and Seishin* is typical of Mokuami's "raw" domestic plays. The plot revolves around a dishonored Buddhist monk turned thief, and a prostitute who casts her lot in with him.

The play was first given in 1859. It had a different title and was performed in seven acts. One of the conventions in the kabuki by this time was that a play had to be in several acts which alternated in the history-play and domestic-play styles. The second, fourth, sixth, and seventh acts of this play were in the "raw" domestic play

style and proved to be more popular than the history acts. It is these four acts which make up the play popularly known as *The Love of Izayoi and Seishin*. It is not, however, a completely self-contained play. Occasional references are made to events in the history scenes, and in the last act a character from the history section appears. (For the sake of clarity, brief synopses of the omitted acts are given on page 21.)

The play had a great success, but because the two leading male characters were based on actual persons and insufficiently disguised, the censors demanded that deletions and revisions be made. A dissolute priest at the Kan'ei Temple in Ueno had suggested the character of Seishin to Mokuami. This priest, after numerous lapses in conduct, had turned thief and earned the name of Seikichi the Devil Priest. In 1806, at the age of twenty-eight, he was arrested in Kyoto, brought back to Edo, tried, and decapitated. Hakuren, the other leading character in the play, was modeled after the thief who broke into the shogun's treasury in 1855 and made off with 4000 gold coins. Mokuami was inconsistent in his observance of the regulation against too close historical verisimilitude. He used the conventional aliases (which fooled nobody in the audience): Kamakura stood for Edo; the Inase River for the Sumida; the Hanamizu Bridge for the Eitai or Ryogoku; Minamoto Yoritomo (1147-1199), the founder of the Kamakura shogunate, for Tokugawa Ieyasu (1542-1616); and Ōiso for the Yoshiwara. But Mokuami also mentions actual place names in Edo like Broad Avenue, which was near Ryogoku Bridge, and the Hundred Piles on the Sumida River. It was only after the fall of the Tokugawa government that this and other ordinances could safely be ignored and plays given as written.

The play exemplifies many of Mokuami's characteristics and style and embodies the philosophy which under-

## INTRODUCTION

lies most of his "raw" domestic plays. The theme is retribution. A series of events carries the action forward and illustrates this theme; a man's circumstances and all his acts are governed by the Buddhist law of karma, or the law of cause and effect. Since every cause has an effect and every effect a cause, a man's reward or punishment in this world has a direct relation to his deeds here and in a previous existence. Every act in this world is therefore preordained. This theme is reiterated at intervals throughout the play. The initial robbery is justified by Seishin on the grounds that it was the victim's predestined misfortune to be at a particular place at a particular time, carrying a substantial sum of money. Seishin sees his own suicide at the end of the play as having been predetermined. This tenet in popular Buddhism was an important part of the mental baggage of the Edo townsman (as to some extent it still is of the modern Japanese), and was a valid theme for a play. The nature of this theme also explains what might be taken as lack of dramatic ingenuity, namely, the various coincidences which occur at crucial moments. (Seishin unknowingly is accessory to the death of his brother-in-law, and later unwittingly exposes his brother as a thief.) But these incidents are the dreadful tightening in the net of circumstances inexorably closing in on Seishin, and they are made more moving to Japanese audiences for their being beyond his control.

Implicit in the play was the didactic thesis of "promoting good and chastising evil." This edifying idea had been seized on by playwrights of the late seventeenth century to justify the existence of kabuki. At this time the theatre had become the target of the shogun's Confucian advisers, who looked upon the kabuki as being on a par with brothels as sources of immorality and extravagance. The dramatists had stilled criticism by promising to point up the moral that good always triumphed over evil. This was perhaps not so much the hindrance that it would seem

to be at first glance. There was the other side of the coin: the most licentious scenes could be played and the most heinous crimes committed on stage so long as the criminals repented and paid for their deeds.

Among such crimes in Mokuami's "raw" domestic plays was murder. Namboku's murder scenes are brutal and savage, but the horror in Mokuami's bloody scenes is greatly ameliorated by the poetic language employed and by the use of music and stylized, almost choreographic, movements. (In this play, Motome dies of a self-inflicted injury, but Seishin believes himself to be the boy's murderer; he also causes the death of Izayoi.) Another crime-extortion figured so frequently in late Tokugawa domestic plays that the term "extortion scene" came into existence. (In the present play, it occurs at the beginning of Act VI where Seishin and Izayoi blackmail her former protector. Their scheme is successful but it ends with an ironic twist of fate: their victim is exposed as a thief and it is his long-lost brother who does this.) And so many robbers figure in Mokuami's plays that he was known as "the thieves' playwright."

Some remarks must be made about the language and stylistic devices used by Mokuami. In the scenes leading up to a climax the speeches are all in the vernacular. In the climactic scenes they are written in the consciously heightened form of poetry, and in classical Japanese this means the use of the basic pattern of alternating lines in five and seven syllables; the "pivot word," which runs together, with no hint of transition, two separate ideas; and "related words," which are words related to one another by class or quality and are woven into the text. An example of the pivot word is found in the opening line of the Kiyomoto lyrics in Act II, Scene 2: "Even on a hazy moonlit night the images of the stars number one, two, three, four, five. 'Five strokes on the alarm bell?'" (p. 24). The reckoning of the stars slips at the number

## INTRODUCTION

"five" into the number of bell strokes which Izayoi fears is the alarm raised at the discovery of her flight. In this literary device the logical conclusion of the first part and the beginning of the second are left unexpressed. An example of the "related words" is found in Act II, Scene 4. Seishin begins by referring to the river on whose banks he and Motome have met. This then calls forth such words as "current," "ice," "freeze," and "waves." (p. 60.) Mokuami was also fond of splitting lines so that the thought expressed by the first character is carried on by a second (or third or fourth) and then tossed back to the first and brought to a conclusion (pp. 23-24, 38-39, 48-49, 60, 123).

These literary devices present problems of varying difficulty for the translator. The "split dialogue" and the "related words" are relatively easy. The pivot word, however, can only be translated literally in a clumsy way or explained in elaborate footnotes. When they occur in this play, the cunning effect has been sacrificed for the meaning. No attempt has been made to retain the syllabic count; this is an impossibility.

Another problem is the structure of the play. Western readers expecting a long sweep leading to a climax will be disappointed. As in most kabuki plays, there are several climaxes distributed in each act. The most important in this play occur as follows: Act II: the encounter of Izayoi and Seishin, Motome's death, and Seishin's metamorphosis in character; Act IV: Izayoi's renunciation of the world; Act VI: the extortion scene and the discovery of the fraternal relationship between Seishin and Hakuren; Act VII: Izayoi's death and Seishin's suicide. The structural balance is further upset by the almost equal importance of three characters—Seishin, Izayoi, and Hakuren. (In Act IV Seishin does not appear, and Hakuren is the leading character.) Moreover, too much is made of the haiku poet and his comic junkman friend in Act IV.

This can be explained by the fact that the kabuki has always been a repertory theater with a full complement of actors signed for the season. Once the company was assembled, it was the playwright's responsibility to provide each actor with roles within his speciality. (Actors specialized in the following parts: young man, adult male, villain, old man, adolescent boy, comic, young girl, adult woman, old woman, and child. In the 1859-1860 season there happened to be three senior actors and a popular comedian at the theater for which Mokuami was the house writer.) This necessity sometimes led Mokuami and others to write a big scene for each actor to play. A glaring example here is the death of Ofuji in Act VI. Hakuren's wife has been a secondary character until attention is suddenly focused upon her in a contrived and unbelievable scene. She pretends to turn informer on her husband after the revelation that he is a thief, in order to force her husband to kill her. It was a role tailored to the personality of an actor who specialized in playing noble women.

The use of music by Mokuami has been mentioned. He was partial to the Kiyomoto school for its pensive and melancholy melodic line which made it peculiarly suitable for sad love scenes. He used it in Act II, Scene 2, in the encounter of Izayoi and Seishin. (It must be noted here that the narrator, or chanter, and a samisen player accompany the scene in full sight of the audience. The chanter in other scenes of the play is normally concealed.) The lyrics for this scene were written by Mokuami, but he often appropriated them from other Kiyomoto pieces or from the narratives of puppet plays. In the latter case, Mokuami sets the scene so that the music comes from a neighboring house. This procedure is sometimes unsatisfactory. The emotional state of the actors onstage and the characters in the music may coincide in general, but not always in detail. In Act VII, Seishin's overwrought

## INTRODUCTION

condition as he prepares to kill his son is echoed in the narration from a puppet play about a father's anguish at the impending execution of his wayward daughter. There is a concurrence in pathos, but the narrative is so famous that it serves to distract rather than intensify the tragic mood. But perhaps a similarity in mood was all that Mokuami's audiences required, for in the face of the overall impact of the scene, niceties of musical appropriateness were of small import.

In treating the theme of retribution in terms of human passions at a less-than-princely level, Mokuami was in his element. The fate of a monk torn between the demands of the flesh and the spirit, and the consequences of his easy capitulation to worldly desires, were more readily understandable to audiences than, say, the fate of an ambitious warrior. They could also sympathize with a prostitute more than with a princess. Monk and prostitute, bound by karma, lurk in the shadowy edge of society, and even as they alter their course (he turns thief; she becomes successively a kept woman, nun, wife and mother), each new development brings them a step closer to their ultimate destiny. Mokuami was aware of the importance of contrasting moods in creating greater dramatic force. Each of the four acts has a comic opening which leads to one or more moving climaxes, some of which are characterized by poetic passages of great beauty. All of the leading roles are eminently playable—another reason why this play, which is representative of the works of one of the major playwrights in the kabuki, and typical of a dramatic genre, has remained a favorite in the kabuki repertory for over a hundred years.



---

## SYNOPSIS OF HISTORY PLAYS

---

### ACT ONE

Koizuka Motome, Izayoi's brother and a page in the Ôe household, is injured by a stray arrow during an archery contest. Motome refuses monetary compensation, but when he learns that his father is trying desperately to raise an impossibly large sum, he accepts. Carrying the money, he starts home, unaware that it is meant for Seishin, his sister's lover, whom he has never met.

Yaegaki Monza, a lordless samurai, is accepted as retainer to the Ôe family on the recommendation of the wicked advisor, Kageyama Budayû, who has seen evidence of Monza's skill with the sword and wishes to use him for his own ends. Budayû binds Monza to him by giving him a sword and the promise of his daughter's hand in marriage.

### ACT THREE

On the night of the wedding of his daughter to Monza, Budayû reveals his plan of overthrowing the Ôe family and demands that Monza join him. Monza is forced to agree, but realizing that his loyalty to the Ôe family is

THE LOVE OF IZAYOI & SEISHIN

greater, he changes his mind, kills Budayū who turns on him, and escapes. Seishin, now a thief, has broken into Budayū's house to steal an heirloom sword, and observes Monza's flight. Monza is accused of the theft. It is this sword which Seishin restores to Budayu's son Shigenojō in Act VII, Scene 2.

ACT FIVE

Shigenojō tracks Monza down in the Hakone mountains and corners him. When Shigenojō tumbles over a cliff, Monza leaps after him, explains the reason for his murder of Budayū, and then commits suicide, bitterly regretting the unjust accusation of the theft of the sword. The reunion of Seishin and Izayoi in Hakone is effected in a conventional kabuki scene—a brief and wordless dumbshow.

ACT TWO

ACT FOUR

ACT SIX

ACT SEVEN

TRANSLATOR'S NOTES

The translation is of the entire work as published in the collected works of Mokuami (*Mokuami Zenshū*, vol. 3, pp. 347-509). The only additions to the text have been supplementary stage directions (mainly the way certain lines were delivered), and a note on the time element for each act. These minor changes have been made for the sake of clarity.

In the stage directions the areas designated as "stage right," "stage left," "stage rear," etc., are in relation to the actor facing the audience.

All names except the author's on the title page are given in the Japanese manner: the family name first followed by the given name.

---

The Love of Izayoi & Seishin

---

---

## CAST OF CHARACTERS

(In order of appearance)

---

GONJI, a minor servant  
DEMPACHI, a minor servant  
ICHISUKE, a footman  
KYŌGETSU, a young novice and disciple of Seishin at  
Paradise Temple  
SAGOBEL, Izayoi's father  
TŌJURŌ, a magistrate; later disguised as Mokusuke, a  
manservant  
SEISHIN, a sexton at Paradise Temple; later the thief  
Seikichi  
KANE, a streetwalker  
IZAYOI, a courtesan  
SANJI, a boatman  
HAKUREN, a moneylender; in reality the thief Ōdera Shōbei  
MOTOME, Izayoi's brother; a page  
GINSHICHI, a junk dealer  
HEMPUKU, a haiku poet  
YONE, maid to Izayoi  
OFUJI, Hakuren's wife  
TORA, maid to Ofuji  
NIHACHI, Tora's father; a noodle vendor  
DONSHICHI, Nihachi's friend

THE LOVE OF IZAYOI & SEISHIN

KANROKU, *Nihachi's friend*

SUKIZÔ, *a gravedigger*

DORAICHI, *a buyer of personal effects from cemetery offices*

SHIGENOJÔ, *a samurai searching for a valuable sword stolen by Seikichi*

ACT TWO SCENE ONE

Time: New Year's; late afternoon.

*The scene is the foot of the Hanamizu Bridge in Kamakura. At stage center is a stall twelve feet wide, spread with rush matting; a shop for New Year's decorations. Round wreaths of plaited straw hang from its eaves. At stage left is the foot of the bridge, and at stage right, a watchman's shack. A light-blue backdrop hangs at the rear of the stage.*

*The curtain opens to drum and flute music. We see Ichisuke, a footman, wearing a crested cotton gown and carrying a sword. Over his shoulder he carries straw sandals strung on a pole. Two minor servants, Gorji and Dempachi, are gossiping.*

GONJI: Hey, Ichisuke, I hear that a Buddhist priest who broke his vow of chastity is going to be brought to the Hanamizu bridge today and exiled from the city.

DEMPACHI: So that's why they have set up that shed for

THE LOVE OF IZAYOI & SEISHIN

exposing criminals on Broad Avenue.

ICHISUKE: (*with a laugh*) You fool! That over there is a New Year's decoration stall they haven't removed yet.

GONJI: I was wondering why it had those round straw wreaths. So they are leftovers from the end of the year, eh?

DEMPACHI: This monk who broke his vow of chastity—which temple does he belong to?

ICHISUKE: Didn't you know? He is Seishin, the sexton at Paradise Temple. He became infatuated with Izayoi, the prostitute at the Ōgiya in Ōiso. The upshot is exile.

DEMPACHI: But even a monk or a pederast is after all a man, so there is no reason for them to dislike women.

GONJI: Come to think of it, Shinran, the founder of my faith, was very human. He permitted his priests to eat and to marry. Isn't it a blessed faith?

ICHISUKE: I haven't had a woman in a long time. I have to go around hawking toothpicks and straw sandals to buy wine to go with my fish salad.

DEMPACHI: Me, too. I haven't had a woman since last month.

GONJI: Anyway, why don't we go have a drink somewhere?

ICHISUKE: I would like to join you, as it has been a long time since I had any wine. But the fact is I don't have a copper on me.

DEMPACHI: Don't worry about that. You heard Gonji—he'll pay.

GONJI (*upset*): What? What makes you think I have any money? If I did I would go drink by myself.

ICHISUKE: Were you counting on Dempachi, then?

GONJI: No, I was counting on your straw sandals.

[ 28 ]

ACT TWO SCENE ONE

ICHISUKE: I can't afford to buy you drinks on these. These straw sandals are worth three hundred coppers and I put in a lot of time on them. I was planning on buying myself a small amount of wine for a nightcap and getting myself a street walker for a hundred coppers.

DEMPACHI: That's a fine how-do-you-do!

GONJI: Never mind—buy us a small bottle and we will take care of the rest.

ICHISUKE (*alarmed*): I don't like the sound of that.

DEMPACHI: Come along, now, and don't make such a fuss.

ICHISUKE (*dismayed*): Confound it! I've been trapped by scoundrels!

*Dempachi drags Ichisuke off toward stage left in the direction of the bridge. Gonji follows. Then Sagobei, Izayoi's father, comes up the runway extending from the rear of the theatre to the stage. He holds the hand of the eleven-year-old acolyte Kyōgetsu, who is dressed in a gray robe and a short clerical apron. They stop on the runway.*

KYŌGETSU: Tell me, Sagobei, is the place they are bringing Seishin very far away?

SAGOBEL: No, no, it is not far. They will soon be bringing him to the foot of that bridge you see over there.

KYŌGETSU: Then let us wait for him over there.

SAGOBEL: Come along now, and take care you don't stumble.

*They continue to the stage proper.*

SAGOBEL (*sadly*): When I asked at the watchman's shack back there just now, he told me that they would be

[ 29 ]

THE LOVE OF IZAYOI & SEISHIN

leading him by at any moment. I have not seen him since he went to prison. I expect he has lost weight. Where will he go from here? I thought of giving him some money so that he could at least put his affairs in order. But I have been unable to do so. There has been no word from my son whom I sent off to try and raise some money. So I am certain he has failed. Ah! It seems there is no money to be had in the world.

KYŌGETSU (*eagerly*): Here, Sagobei, I don't have much, but if you want coppers, I have some temple offerings with me.

*From under the collar of his gown he withdraws some money wrapped in paper.*

SAGOBEL: Oh, no, no. I do not need anything now. Keep it and don't lose it. Well, now, they certainly ought to be leading him by soon.

*He looks down the runway.*

SAGOBEL (*excitedly*): Speak of a person and there is his shadow, they say. Look, look, over there.

KYŌGETSU: Is Seishin coming?

SAGOBEL: Yes, he is. We might get rebuked if we get in the way. Let's make ourselves inconspicuous.

*The two conceal themselves in the back of the watchman's shack at stage right. From offstage come the sound of a drum beating as at the hourly tattoo, and music in the style of Buddhist liturgies. Two footmen in iris-patterned skirts and carrying poles about six feet in length lead the procession up the runway. They are followed by Seishin, with a month's growth of hair on his normally shaven head. He is dressed in a light-blue gown,*

[ 30 ]

ACT TWO SCENE ONE

*and is bound with a rope held by two policemen wearing short black robes. He is followed by Terasawa Tōjūrō, an official. His jacket is split in the back for his two swords, and he is attended by two lackeys carrying a round campaign hat and a camp stool. They come straight to the main stage where the policemen lay out a straw mat at stage center.*

POLICEMEN (*gruffly*): Sit down!

*Seishin squats on the mat. His captors stand by at the rear. Terasawa seats himself on the camp stool at stage left.*

TŌJŪRŌ (*gravely*): Seishin, disciple to Kyōzen of Paradise Temple!

SEISHIN: Aye!

*He bows.*

TŌJŪRŌ: It was most reprehensible of you, a monk, to have become involved with the prostitute named Izayoi employed at the Ōgiya in the post town of Ōiso, and to have recklessly spent gold and silver on wine and sensual pleasures. You ought to have been punished, but on exceptional clemency, you are hereby banished from the valleys and the seven counties of Kamakura.

SEISHIN: Aye!

TŌJŪRŌ: Accept your sentence with gratitude!

SEISHIN (*humbly*): I was told that when an only son takes the tonsure, nine generations of his family are born in heaven. I shaved off my hair in order to pray for the repose of the souls of my parents, and under the tutelage of my master Kyōzen, prayed diligently day and night for the past twenty-five years. But I was still unable to free myself from the wheel of transmigration in

[ 31 ]

THE LOVE OF IZAYOI & SEISHIN

this world, strayed into carnal ways, and now receive sentence from on high. From this moment on I will revert to my original pure heart, for my heart has awakened to the truth for the first time. For the mercy by which a heavy sentence has been commuted to an order of exile, I am extremely grateful.

*He bows.*

TÔJÛRÔ: Untie him.

POLICEMEN: Aye!

*They free Seishin.*

TÔJÛRÔ (*gently*): Now, then, that completes my official business. I received instructions from old Kyôzen at Paradise Temple in reading Buddhist texts by rote. I am therefore as good as a fellow disciple of yours, and I do not consider you a stranger. But the facts are that a thief entered Paradise Temple a while back, stole the 3000 gold pieces offered to the temple by Lord Yoritomo, and we do not know the whereabouts of this thief. Suspicion fell upon you, and we once interrogated you. But your protestations of innocence held up, and you are being exiled specifically on the crime of having broken your vow of chastity. Your old master always praised you for your talents and intelligence. His teachings of twenty-five years have come to nothing. He must be sorely disappointed. Since you are still young, mend your ways, train yourself further, and wipe away this disgrace to your old teacher. Unless you do this, you will not be called a true priest.

SEISHIN (*touched*): I am grateful to you for your kind advice. For the present I will quit this locality. To regain my status as priest I will cheerfully reside in any rude temple and undergo training. Then I will see you again.

[ 32 ]

ACT TWO SCENE ONE

TÔJÛRÔ: Then I will petition on high for the commutation of your sentence of exile from Kamakura, and we will happily meet again.

SEISHIN: Until then, may you be in good health.

TÔJÛRÔ: I hope you will concentrate on your training.

SEISHIN: Thank you.

TÔJÛRÔ: As my official duties are now done with, I will report to my superiors about this matter.

*He rises.*

SEISHIN: Goodbye, Terasawa.

TÔJÛRÔ: Seishin, you must not linger.

SEISHIN: Aye!

*He bows.*

TÔJÛRÔ: Attendants, come!

*The hour-drum tattoo is played, and Tôjûrô leads his entourage down the runway. There is a commotion, and Sagobei and Kyôgetsu run in from stage right.*

SAGOBEL (*joyfully*): Seishin, you are alive and well!

SAGOBEL and KYÔGETSU: Our felicitations!

*They embrace Seishin.*

SEISHIN: Oh! You surprised me. You are Izayoi's father and Kyôgetsu the acolyte. I am grateful to you for coming to see me.

*Melancholy music is played offstage. Seishin looks at the two with a happy expression. Sagobei, looking at Seishin's haggard form, weeps, wiping away the tears with a towel.*

[ 33 ]

THE LOVE OF IZAYOI & SEISHIN

SAGOBEL (*weeping*): Ah! You have become so thin in the short time that you were away in prison. They have reason to call prison a hell on earth. The more I think about it the more pity I feel for you. It is my daughter who is wholly responsible for your present situation. I know very well that love is beyond our control, but the reason for your exile is Izayoi. This I cannot atone for. Please forgive me.

*He presses his hands together in supplication.*

SEISHIN (*embarrassed*): Ah! When you tell me that, I am out of countenance before you. What blame is there on Izayoi? I suffered the humiliation of arrest only because I gave in to passions forbidden to a priest. I have nobody to blame. This was all due to the inclinations of this stupid priest. Truly, this is the punishment of the Buddha. On no account must you trouble your heart about it.

SAGOBEL: But to become like this—a shadow of your former self. . . .

SEISHIN: Ah, don't bring up the past. Nothing will undo that now.

*He pats Kyōgetsu on the head.*

SEISHIN (*touched*): I am glad you came to see me.

KYŌGETSU: I learned today that you were going to be exiled to a distant place. I was not sure whether I would ever see you again. As this may be the last time, I came to thank you for having taught me the sutras.

SEISHIN: That was very commendable of you. I am grateful that you came to see me. You were under my tutelage barely a year. There are those whom I taught longer. But how fickle people are. When one falls

[ 34 ]

ACT TWO SCENE ONE

on evil days no one comes near you. Only you have come. I am very happy.

SAGOBEL: Oh, Kyōgetsu is wiser than his years. Since yesterday he has been after me with, "Sagobei, if you are going, take me with you." From early this morning he kept saying, "Come, let us go! Aren't you ready yet?" He dragged me after him.

*Kyōgetsu then takes the paper-wrapped offerings from under his collar.*

KYŌGETSU: This is not much, but I saved it from the offerings given to me at funerals and memorial services. I would like to give it to you for spending money. Please use it.

*He holds the packet out. Seishin is touched.*

SEISHIN: My heart is full of gratitude. You are barely eleven years old. Yet you would give me those offerings because in your tender heart you thought I would have a difficult time of it in exile. I am grateful to you.

*He reverently lifts the packet to his forehead.*

SEISHIN: I will accept your word for the deed. There are a number of senior disciples who are now heads of temples. If I seek them out along the way and travel on their charity, I will not need your offerings. Take them home with you.

KYŌGETSU: No, no. I saved them expressly for you. Please take them.

SEISHIN: Your words are sufficient. Take these home with you and buy yourself the books you like or something else.

[ 35 ]



THE LOVE OF IZAYOI & SEISHIN

KYŌGETSU: No, no. You cannot make me take them back.

SEISHIN: But I am unworthy of these offerings.

*The two push the offerings back and forth. Sagobei breaks in.*

SAGOBEL: Oh, come, come, Seishin. He does this out of concern for your welfare. Why don't you condescend to accept his kindness? After all, no matter how much you insist, he will not take them back.

SEISHIN: Then I will accept your kindness.

KYŌGETSU (*pleased*): You will?

SEISHIN: With gratitude.

KYŌGETSU: Ah, thank you!

*Seishin slips the packet under his collar.*

SEISHIN: Sagobei, look at Kyōgetsu. He is mature for one so young. The boy makes me think of my own youth. I was born the son of a fisherman in the outskirts of Funabashi in Shimōfusa. My only brother was kidnapped when he was ten and we never found him. Worried sick over him, both my parents died miserably. I was without anyone to look after me. To pray for the repose of their souls I became a disciple at Paradise Temple. My master there used to say I would make a fine priest. Look at me now. Kyōgetsu, you were born with a fine mind. When you grow up, devote yourself wholeheartedly to the way of the Buddha, and do not stray into evil ways. Don't compound evil deeds by thinking that the first time no one will know, and the second time will not matter. They will not be overlooked by the Buddha or the bodhisattvas. Sentence from above awaits you in the end. You will heap disgrace upon the teacher to whom you owe a debt of obligation, and your punishment will be exile. All the diligent training will come to

[ 36 ]

ACT TWO SCENE ONE

nothing in a twinkling. One error will undo the careful work of years. I am a good example of that. Persevere and let nothing deflect you from your aim. You will end up with your own temple.

KYŌGETSU (*solemnly*): I am obliged to you for your advice. I swear that I will do my best.

SAGOBEL: Remember what Seishin told you when you grow up. Be a good priest. Oh! What with the business with Kyōgetsu here, I had forgotten. Here is the wadded silk gown my daughter sent over yesterday with instructions that it be given to you. Throw away your dirty clothes and dress in something clean.

*He takes out the silk gown from its cloth wrapper.*

SEISHIN: (*astonished*): You mean Izayoi made this garment and is giving it to me?

SAGOBEL: Yes. A gown, an undergarment, a sash, a towel, and even a pair of slippers.

SEISHIN (*moved*): Ah! What a touching kindness for someone in the pleasure quarters! I accept them gratefully.

SAGOBEL: Come, exchange your dirty clothes for clean ones as quickly as you can.

SEISHIN: No. To wear them as I am would soil them. I will put these on after I clean myself at the baths.

SAGOBEL: To be sure. That is a good idea. Where do you intend to go from there?

SEISHIN: As I am embarrassed to be seen, I will quit this place tonight. I will stay in Kyoto for a while to train myself anew to become a true priest. Izayoi may think me untrue to our vows, but tell her that under the present circumstances, our affair is ended and she must resign herself to that fact.

[ 37 ]

THE LOVE OF IZAYOI & SEISHIN

SAGOBEL: Ah! That is a commendable resolution! The truth is that I did not approve of a person in your position doing what you did. But even though I felt that it was a bad business, I could do nothing about it after you became lovers. But wisdom comes with experience, they say. You showed good sense when you said that you will take this opportunity to renounce her completely. Of course, when my daughter hears that you have gone to Kyoto forever, I fully expect her to protest. But as her father, I will make her give you up, no matter what she says, since it will be for your sake, whom she loves and cherishes. Please have no concern.

SEISHIN (*with a touch of regret*): The fact is that I would like to see her once more without her seeing me. But I am afraid that if I did, I would be reluctant to part from her.

SAGOBEL: It would be better not to see her. But when I say this, Seishin, please do not think that I looked the other way and let you see my daughter while you were at the Paradise Temple but that I ask you not to now because of your disgrace. I swear by the Nyorai Buddha that such is not my intention.

SEISHIN: I know your heart. Why should I doubt you?

*A temple bell tolls the hour.*

SEISHIN: It should not be long before dusk. No matter how long we talk, the sorrows of parting will never end. Please leave me.

SAGOBEL (*sadly*): I take my leave of you, but somehow I feel we will never meet again....

KYŌGETSU: ...and I grieve at this parting.

SEISHIN: You are right. This is not a case where I can return in a year or two....

[ 38 ]

ACT TWO SCENE ONE

SAGOBEL: ...and in interim of the long months and days ...

KYŌGETSU: ...in a world that is full of uncertainties....

SEISHIN: ...this may be our parting.

*Seishin takes Kyōgetsu's hands.*

SAGOBEL: Ah, do not say such an unpropitious thing! The gods protect us!

SEISHIN: Then if fortune smiles on us....

SAGOBEL: ...we will, in time....

SEISHIN and SAGOBEL: ...see each other again.

*Sagobei and Kyōgetsu rise.*

KYŌGETSU: Goodbye, Seishin.

SEISHIN: Learn your sutras well.

KYŌGETSU: I will.

SAGOBEL: Come, let us go.

*To a song offstage and a bell tolling, Sagobei and Kyōgetsu exit hand in hand down the runway. Seishin watches them go.*

SEISHIN: How thoughtful that wise little Kyōgetsu is, even of me. He shows every sign of becoming a fine priest in the future. But the precept against carnal desire is difficult to observe. Ah! I hope he will be spared my fate. It is already dusk. This suits me fine. I will leave as quickly as I can before people see me.

*He rises, carrying the bundle.*

SEISHIN (*wavering*): But wait. I have renounced her, but Izayoi and I were inseparable these last two years. If I could have just one more glimpse of her....

[ 39 ]

THE LOVE OF IZAYOI & SEISHIN

*With his hand, he gestures as though to banish such a thought.*

SEISHIN: Ah! Passion, like a dog, will not leave me though I drive it away. I prostrate myself before the Amida Buddha! Hail to the Amida Buddha!

*He prays reverently. The stage set revolves to the sound of temple bells.*

II. 2

Time: evening of the same day

*The scene: the Hundred Piles Break-water. Along the full length of the stage, a raised level, two feet high, represents a stone wall. At stage left is the break-water piling. Also at stage left a Buddhist altar with its rear to the audience is set on the raised level. At stage right a pine branch overhangs a bamboo fence. The entire down stage area represents water.*

*The bell tolls and there is drum and flute music until the set comes to rest. Suddenly there is a commotion, and Kane, an unlicensed prostitute, runs out from the crossroads shrine pursued by Ichisuke, the footman from the previous scene.*

ICHISUKE (*furious*): Hey, hey, you slut! Give me back those hundred coppers!

KANE: Give them back my eye! You didn't pay me for last night.

ICHISUKE (*indignantly*): That was on the cuff last night. Even so a hundred coppers are too much when it

[ 40 ]

ACT TWO SCENE TWO

should only be twenty-four. I need a little money tonight, so give me the change.

KANE (*soothingly*): Don't be such a tightwad. I will show you a good time.

ICHISUKE (*curtly*): Not tonight. I told you I need the money. I can't be hanging about.

KANE (*equally curt*): If you don't have the time tonight, come tomorrow night.

*She prepares to go. Ichisuke grabs her.*

ICHISUKE (*threateningly*): So you won't return it even after I have pleaded with you?

KANE (*scoffingly*): Why should I?

ICHISUKE (*seeing red*): You slut! I'll teach you a lesson or two!

*He seizes the edge of Kane's sash. Kane resorts to masculine gestures for comic effect.*

KANE: What impudence!

*The two scuffle in knockabout fashion, fighting for possession of the coppers. They drop the bag. They cannot locate it in the dark.*

KANE (*dismayed*): Oh, oh! What a calamity! I dropped the money!

ICHISUKE: What? You dropped it?

KANE: Find it and I will give you half.

*They search. He finds the money and a rolled poster.*

ICHISUKE: I found the money and this thing.

KANE: Read it quickly and see if we can turn it into cash.

[ 41 ]

THE LOVE OF IZAYOI & SEISHIN

ICHISUKE: I hope I can read it without stumbling.

*He unrolls the poster*

ICHISUKE: "The title of the following musical narrative is 'The Early Evening Moon Seen Through the Plum and Willow Trees'. The singer is Kiyomoto Enjudayū and the samisen player is Kiyomoto Tokubei. The actors are Iwai Kumesaburō and Ichikawa Kodanji."

KANE (*disappointed*): Oh, bosh! That's only a poster for the musical narrative in this scene.

ICHISUKE (*businesslike*): Come on, you promised. Hand over half.

KANE: Not on your life!

ICHISUKE (*furiously*): You whore! I'll take it away from you if that's the last thing I do!

KANE: Oh, stop harping on the same old tune!

ICHISUKE (*suddenly stepping out of character*): Oh, that reminds me, I must make the announcement: Ladies and gentlemen! The musical narrative for which you have been waiting now begins!

KANE: We are the ones who called the tune!

ICHISUKE: Get away with you!

*Then to the rapid drumbeats which are a convention in the kabuki in scenes laid near water, plus flute music, Kane exits running to stage left with Ichisuke in pursuit. A section of the paling at stage right then falls open, revealing the Kiyomoto musicians on a platform. The music begins.*

NARRATOR: Even on a hazy moonlit night the images of the stars number one, two, three, four, five. "Five

[ 42 ]

ACT TWO SCENE TWO

strokes on the alarm bell? Am I being pursued?" Fleeing the quarter, Izayoi hears the tolling of the hour bell with a beating heart.

*To samisen music and the ringing of a bell, Izayoi comes swiftly up the runway. She is dressed in the casual dress of a prostitute, with a sash of soft silk. A kerchief is draped over the head. She stops on the runway.*

NARRATOR: Izayoi comes, fleeing along the frosty river's edge with an anxious heart. She is pursued by the wind, and flies she knows not where. She dreads the eyes of men more than the whitefish does the bonfire and the nets of a fisherman's boat.

*Izayoi pantomimes on the runway, then comes to the stage proper.*

IZAYOI: Oh, what a relief to know that the voices I heard were not those of my pursuers! I knew that Seishin was being exiled today. My father and I are obligated to him. I longed to see him and escaped from the brothel. I have come this far but I have lost my way in the dark. I pray that I might be able to see him!

NARRATOR: She stops for a moment. Upstream, from a pleasure boat returning from a plum-viewing party, comes a song: "If you want to meet your lover in secret, avoid a pitch-black night. Your luck on the sixteenth night, the *izayoi*, when no clouds conceal the moon, will be good. Wait patiently until then." Taking this as a lucky omen, Izayoi prepares to hurry on.

*Izayoi starts to exit at stage left. Then Seishin enters at stage left, dressed in a plain, elegant gown. He wears a black hood. They pass, avoiding each others*

[ 43 ]

THE LOVE OF IZAYOI & SEISHIN

*eyes. The moon appears, and their eyes meet.*

SEISHIN (*astonished*): Aren't you Izayoi?

IZAYOI: You are Seishin?

SEISHIN (*with mixed feelings of joy and distress*): Ah, an unfortunate meeting!

*He starts to go, but Izayoi catches hold of him.*

IZAYOI (*with feeling*): How I have longed to see you!

NARRATOR: From the openings of her sleeves comes the fragrance of plum blossoms as she clings to him. He is soon charmed.

*Izayoi detains Seishin. Seishin realizes that there is no way out of this situation now.*

SEISHIN (*suppressing his feelings*): You're all alone. Where are you going in the dark and so far from the quarter?

IZAYOI (*crushed*): Where? Oh, Seishin, how heartless of you! Yesterday my father told me that you were to be expelled and that I would never again see you in the quarter. When I heard him say that he thought you might be starting on a journey somewhere, I just had to see you. At the quarter every omen was evil and pointed to a long separation. I decided to leave and sneaked out at sundown. I did this because I wanted to see you.

SEISHIN (*softening*): I thought I could never see you again. But it was foreordained that I would run across you here. What have I done in my previous existence to deserve your kindness? Look at what I am now. Only today I received these clothes from you. It is thanks to you that I will be able to go to my friends with my head high.

[ 44 ]

ACT TWO SCENE TWO

IZAYOI: You speak of friends. Where are you going from here?

SEISHIN: I am not sure where I am going. But having been exiled, I cannot remain here. When I leave this place, I think I will seek out an acquaintance in Kyoto and get his help.

IZAYOI (*pleadingly*): In that case, please take me along with you.

SEISHIN (*troubled*): Having sworn my love to you until the next world, I want to take you along with me. But Izayoi, listen to the reasons I cannot: by some delusion of the heart I broke my vow of chastity and have been banished. I have disgraced not only myself but have heaped shame upon the name of my teacher to whom I am forever indebted.

NARRATOR: Seishin will take everything up to now for a dream and revert to his original aim.

SEISHIN (*with determination*): I will give you up, go to Kyoto, and renew my aim of attaining the way of a priest. You must return to the quarter. I understand your term of indenture is long. Choose a good client and entrust yourself to him. Remember that your first duty is to your father.

IZAYOI: You are cruel, Seishin.

NARRATOR (*The entreaty*): "You might think that I am reproaching you when I tell you this, but I did not become infatuated with a priest out of wantonness or as a passing fancy, nor was I fickle. I swear on the Amida Buddha that I would gladly wear a nun's habits into the next world. But you must be a demon in the guise of a priest to tell me after our long separation to sever our ties. I will not hear of it," she says, and clings to him. Her bitterness and grief are not feigned.

[ 45 ]

THE LOVE OF IZAYOI & SEISHIN

*Izayoi pantomimes to the lyrics and weeps, clinging to Seishin.*

SEISHIN: I am moved that your love for me is so deep. But stop and think how ill-matched we are. Even in outward appearance I am not an ordinary man but an unfrocked priest. You, on the other hand, are celebrated in Ōiso. How can I consent to your coming with me? Everyone will laugh at you. People will say, "Aren't there other men in the world? What peculiar tastes that Izayoi has!" You know the saying that a mismatch leads to trouble.

IZAYOI (*earnestly*): The other prostitutes may act fickle to make their hard life in the quarter bearable. But for me there is only one man to whom I would give myself for life. You have been considerate not only of me but of my father as well. You were so kind that I even thought that if you should die, I would die with you. But what harsh words just now! You will not change your mind?

SEISHIN (*gruffly*): Come, it is for your own good. Go back to the quarter as quickly as you can and serve out your term.

IZAYOI (*as though to herself*): Those words will echo in my ears in Hades.

NARRATOR: The branches of the willow tree that leans over the bank droop into the water.

*Izayoi, looking reproachfully at Seishin, resolves to die.*

IZAYOI (*with eyes closed, invokes the Buddha*): All hail to the Amida Buddha!

NARRATOR: Izayoi has decided to die. Seishin frantically seizes her.

*Izayoi moves to throw herself into the*

[ 46 ]

ACT TWO SCENE TWO

*river downstage. Seishin throws his arms around her.*

SEISHIN: Ah, wait! Don't be rash!

IZAYOI (*in despair*): Let me go! Let me die!

SEISHIN (*wretchedly*): This is madness! If I let you die, your father and brother will bear a grudge against me. It would be murder added to my other sin. How can I be a party to your death?

IZAYOI: But when I think of the consequences, I have all the more reason for dying.

SEISHIN: What's this? What is the reason?

IZAYOI: I am embarrassed to tell you. After all I am a prostitute. But I am with your . . .

SEISHIN: What? My child?

IZAYOI: Yes. For two months.

*She pantomimes shame.*

SEISHIN: Oh!

*He expresses stunned surprise. To underline the pathos of the scene, samisen and flute music is played.*

IZAYOI: Now you know why I cannot return to the quarter and why I have decided to drown myself. If you have pity for me, please say a mass for me.

*Seishin realizes there is no way to ex-  
tricate himself from this situation.*

SEISHIN (*in despair*): If you should die now, I would be condemning not only you but the child in your womb to a fate without salvation. But if I were to take you along . . .

NARRATOR: . . . I would be an abductor if I am caught,

[ 47 ]

THE LOVE OF IZAYOI & SEISHIN

because you have escaped from the quarter. . . .

SEISHIN: . . . and I would again be arrested. I feel everything closing in around me. I do not have the heart to let you die, and yet I cannot take you along with me. This is a hopeless situation. I will. . . .

IZAYOI: Will you die with me?

SEISHIN (*resigned*): There is no other way.

NARRATOR: "What an ill-fated coincidence that Izayoi is three years older than her name and is in her unlucky nineteenth year, while I am also in my unlucky twenty-fifth. To part now is to turn our backs on the joys of life, just as the wild geese wing home without waiting for the cherry blossoms to bloom. They fly to the distant lands of the north. We go to the Pure Land of the West trusting in the vow of the Amida to save all men. All hail, all hail, all hail to the Amida Buddha. Is this our parting in this world?" they say and embrace. The moon is misty with signs of rain.

*The two resolve to die and pantomime regret at parting. They take each other's hands and, their eyes locked, draw together. The music ends, and a temple bell tolls the hour.*

SEISHIN (*in despair*): An evil karma prevents our union in this world.

IZAYOI: We have made up our minds to die.

SEISHIN: Before we run into the searchers from the quarter. . . .

IZAYOI: . . . let us leap hand in hand into the river. . . .

SEISHIN: . . . in a love suicide that will be a scandal. . . .

IZAYOI: . . . for tomorrow we will be the gossip of the world.

ACT TWO SCENE THREE

SEISHIN: When he hears that gossip. . . .

IZAYOI: . . . how grieved father will be.

SEISHIN: Think of that, too, as having been foreordained.

IZAYOI: . . . father, and our unfilial act of dying before you. . . .

SEISHIN: . . . will you forgive?

SEISHIN and IZAYOI: Hail to the Amida Buddha!

NARRATOR: They look toward the west, and the hands they press in supplication freeze. They leap into the icy river and a notoriety as lovers separated not even by death seems to be theirs.

*The two lovers leap into the river. There is a loud splash and spray dashes up. The set revolves to samisen music and a beating drum suggests waves.*

II. 3

Time: Immediately following preceding scene.

*At the rear of stage center is a sluice gate. On each side are high embankments and pine trees. The stage represents the river. At stage center is a netting boat with a burning torch to attract fish. A dipping net has been cast. In the boat are Haku-ren, a haiku poet who is in reality Ōdera Shōbei, the thief. He wears a hood of black crepe and a striped coat. Sanji, the boatman, has driven a pole into the river-bed and is mooring the boat to it. A merry boatman's ditty, and the sound of waves on the drum are played until the set comes to rest.*

THE LOVE OF IZAYOI & SEISHIN

SANJI (*cheerfully*): I say, Master, it looked for a while like a regular downpour, but luckily it's cleared up.

HAKUREN: We can't be too sure. The clouds are moving quite fast. There may be another shower. Let's quit with this one catch. The more we catch the harder it is to stop.

SANJI: If we haul in a good catch in two or three casts, let's call it a night. It's already close to ten o'clock.

HAKUREN (*surprised*): Close to ten? The nights really have become short. Well, then, it isn't a fancy place, but let's have something to eat at Funaji's before it closes.

SANJI: I'd like that. I know you don't drink, Master, but ah! there's nothing like swigging the wine you pour over a helping of double-size broiled eels. I'm ready for some right now.

HAKUREN: But eels are too oily, and bad for a tippler.

SANJI (*with conviction*): Not at all. Those who choose to eat sea slugs and fish fillets shriveled in cold water are giving themselves airs. To make a long story short, when it comes to food or women, they are not tasty when they are simple. Nothing is tasty unless it is rich and heavy and comes out on a betch.

HAKUREN (*laughing*): Then your regular girl at the Kotsu-kahara brothel must be to your liking, eh?

SANJI (*abashed*): You guessed it. I would like you to meet her one of these days. Her face is a sorry thing, like a balloon fish come in on the tide and stepped on. But even so, there is something about her.

HAKUREN (*laughing*): Here, here. I think you owe me something for listening to you carry on about your tender passion.

SANJI: I'll treat you to eels at Funaji's when we get there.

[ 50 ]

ACT TWO SCENE THREE

HAKUREN: That's fine.

SANJI: Not to change the subject, Master, but you often go to the pleasure quarters, too. That Izayoi at the Ōgiya—is she amusing? She seems very prim when she is at a party.

HAKUREN: You are right. She is entertaining, but I can stand a shade more amiability.

SANJI: Well, then, she's not a bit to your taste, is she? Well, I think it is time to draw up the net.

HAKUREN: Oh, I had completely forgotten about it.

*He rises and tugs at the net.*

HAKUREN: Something is caught in this. It's so heavy I can't pull it in.

SANJI: It may be garbage. Step aside, Master.

*He tugs at the net.*

SANJI (*puzzled*): You are right. This is confoundedly heavy.

*He pulls with all his strength, and Izayoi is discovered enmeshed in the net.*

SANJI: Hey! Something is caught in it.

HAKUREN: Yes. It's a woman.

SANJI (*alarmed*): Not a corpse!

HAKUREN: No, she must have jumped in just now. Help me pull her up.

SANJI (*dismayed*): What a thing to catch!

*They lift Izayoi into the boat and attend to her.*

SANJI: It's just as you said: she has only now jumped in.

HAKUREN: Yes, by the color in her face, the . . .

*He looks closely at Izayoi.*

[ 51 ]



THE LOVE OF IZAYOI & SEISHIN

HAKUREN (*incredulously*): Oh! This is Izayoi of the Ōgiya!  
SANJI: What? Izayoi? You are right. It is.

*Hakuren takes a stimulant from his wallet and puts it in Izayoi's mouth. Sanji fills a dipper with river water and brings it to Izayoi's lips. Hakuren holds her and rubs her chest.*

HAKUREN: Listen, Izayoi! Can you hear me?

SANJI: Izayoi! Izayoi!

*Izayoi moans and revives.*

SANJI (*triumphantly*): We did it! We did it! She's breathing again!

HAKUREN: Are you all right? Pull yourself together.

IZAYOI (*coming to*): Yes, I know where I am. But I must die. Please let me die.

HAKUREN (*puzzled*): Why must you die, Izayoi?

*Izayoi becomes aware of the speaker, looks at Hakuren, and is astonished.*

IZAYOI: Oh! Hakuren! Did you save me?

HAKUREN (*gravely*): What your reasons were I do not know. But your rescue by me is an act of the gods. You are not fated to die yet. To forsake this world seems a poor idea. Tell me, why must you die?

IZAYOI: Don't ask me that.

HAKUREN: I have done many a good deed in my time. Even if a total stranger had been in your place I would take every step to save him. I have known you. Why shouldn't I save you? As to why you must die, tell me the reasons. I am a man. Depending on the circumstances, you may count on me to solve your difficulties.

[ 52 ]

ACT TWO SCENE THREE

SANJI (*sympathetically*): Hear that, Izayoi? You can trust Master. Feel free to tell us the reasons.

IZAYOI: Well, I cannot . . .

HAKUREN: It never hurts to talk things over. Tell me about it.

*Samisen music begins.*

IZAYOI (*feigning*): To tell you this when things have come to this pass is embarrassing. But I had been ill for some time and had been absent from the establishment. Then the three of them—my secret lover, the lady of the house, and the matron—beat me. They said I was pretending to be sick. Even a lowly prostitute falls ill, and when she does how can she receive customers? When I didn't show myself the matron flogged me cruelly. I was desperate and rather than be tortured to death, I chose drowning. I escaped from the quarter determined to die here.

HAKUREN: That was foolish of you. You showed poor judgment. Death is no solution.

IZAYOI: It's easy for you to say that. You don't know what it is to be a prostitute.

HAKUREN: What if I offered your owner a lump sum and bought you out?

IZAYOI (*in disbelief*): What?

HAKUREN: As I just told you, it was by the command of the gods that I rescued you. When I buy you out, I ask you to put yourself completely in my hands for three days. Then, if you have a lover, I will agree to becoming your brother and standing in as a relative to marry you to him. I understand you have a father. Don't you have any feeling of obligation to him? It is unfilial to think that you are free to destroy yourself. Who do you think brought you up? Think again about dying.

[ 53 ]

THE LOVE OF IZAYOI & SEISHIN

IZAYOI (*moved*): How can I thank you for your kindness? I am moved to tears. But if I live . . .

SANJI (*urgently*): Come, come, Izayoi. What is there to think about? You heard what Master just said. He's prepared to unite you with your lover if you have one. That's what the magnanimous Yuranosuke says to the prostitute Okaru in the play. If you insist on dying, there must be another reason.

IZAYOI: No, no, there is no other reason.

SANJI: If not, why not consent?

IZAYOI: Even you take his side. I am grateful. Then, until I deliver my . . .

HAKUREN (*puzzled*): What?

IZAYOI (*quickly recovering*): I mean, when I am delivered from bondage, how happy my father will be.

HAKUREN (*with relief*): Now that you've changed your mind, let's not waste a moment. I will send Sanji to the quarter tonight to settle the matter.

IZAYOI: But such a large sum of money.

HAKUREN: Don't worry. It's not much. But here, you're soaking wet. You'll get chilled on the way to my place. Let's borrow some clothes from Ogin in Yanagibashi.

SANJI: Oh, you mean Ogin, the head geisha at the Waka-take house? Her clothes will fit Izayoi exactly.

HAKUREN: Well, let's get the boat to the bank.

SANJI: All right.

*Sanji unties the rope. Faint wave effects on the drum. Izayoi looks upstream.*

IZAYOI (*mournfully*): You must be . . .

HAKUREN: What did you say?

[ 54 ]

ACT TWO SCENE FOUR

IZAYOI: You must be married.

HAKUREN (*gruffly*): What if I am? I'll set you up in a separate house.

IZAYOI: And when your wife finds out?

HAKUREN: How timid you are.

SANJI: Look out, we're off!

*He poles and the boat moves off.*

IZAYOI: Oh!

*She staggers and falls toward Hakuren, who catches her.*

HAKUREN: This is not bad at all!

*Sanji leers at them.*

SANJI (*shouting*): We're heading for port!

*The stage revolves to the sound of waves and a gay tune.*

II. 4

Time: Simultaneously with preceding scene

*Scene: the Hundred Piles Breakwater. Narrative chanting in the Takemoto style begins.*

NARRATOR: Moving across the sky the rain clouds pour pale gray ink. Legend has it that a temple bell sank at this spot in the river long ago. But because he learned to swim, Seishin cannot sink, try as he might.

*Seishin surfaces and holds onto a pile. He climbs up onto the raised level.*

SEISHIN: I am buoyed up by the water and cannot drown. Brought up as I was in the fishing village of Gyōtoku in Shimōsa, learning to swim was no trick. This skill is

[ 55 ]

now a hindrance to my following Izayoi. How wretched I am!

NARRATOR: Seishin gazes at the river with a look of self-reproach.

SEISHIN: But Izayoi has drowned. Formless as it was, my seed in her womb . . .

NARRATOR: . . . has gone—ah, woe!—journeying with her to the Land of the Shades. I will follow them and we will cross the river Sanzu in the land of the dead. A dead infant piles pebbles on the banks of the river Sai until he is saved by the bodhisattva Jizō. And it is stones that Seishin now puts in his sleeve pockets for ballast. What a contrast to his heavy heart is the gay music from upstream. It comes from a pleasure boat returning from a plum-viewing.

*Seishin picks up some stones and slips them into his sleeves to provide weight. Then a boat appears at stage left and sounds of revelry are heard.*

SEISHIN (*disturbed*): Oh, for tranquillity to meditate on the Buddha! I wish to be led straight to paradise. But that music makes my mind stray.

NARRATOR: He presses his hands together in supplication. A soft spring rain falls like mist. How is Motome, the young page, to know that a sad fate awaits him here? With drops of rain that will soon turn into tears falling from his umbrella, Motome comes.

*Seishin leans against a pile and gazes at the boat. Motome comes up the runway wearing a long-sleeved gown, a sword, and wooden clogs. He carries an umbrella. He speaks on the runway.*

MOTOME (*anxiously*): That must have been the midnight

[ 56 ]

bell. I had intended to return earlier, but a sudden rain came on, and I wasted more time than I should looking for an umbrella.

*Seishin is distracted by the music. He and Motome soliloquize.*

SEISHIN (*in desperation*): Ah! How little of other people's suffering do they know. They weaken my resolve.

MOTOME: My father told me yesterday that he had to have some money by today.

SEISHIN: The ups and downs of men's fortunes, to be rich or poor, were foreordained. Why should one bother to struggle?

MOTOME: I had to ask Lord Mondo of the Ōe family to lend me the money.

SEISHIN: It is one way to live riotously and gaily in the company of geisha and male entertainers.

MOTOME: Oh, to get this to father as quickly as possible. He will be overjoyed!

SEISHIN: To stand begging at a gate in rags and on the verge of starvation: that, too, is a way of life.

MOTOME (*in distress*): In my anxiety to make haste I feel a chronic pain coming on.

SEISHIN: To drown: this, too, is one's man's life.

MOTOME: Is there no tree to rest under, to ease the pain in my stomach?

SEISHIN: My impure mind prevents me from killing myself.

MOTOME (*in desperation*): Oh, why can't I go faster?

SEISHIN: What am I . . .

SEISHIN and MOTOME: . . . to do?

[ 57 ]

THE LOVE OF IZAYOI & SEISHIN

NARRATOR: In each heart there are troubled thoughts that are like torn clouds. Their gloomy thoughts become darker. There is another downpour. Motome doubles up with painful spasms.

*Seishin leans against a pile and listens intently to the sounds of merry-making coming from the boat. Motome, in agony, comes to the main stage staggering and pressing his chest.*

MOTOME: Sir! Sir!

*He claps Seishin on the back. Seishin is startled.*

SEISHIN: Who's that?

MOTOME: It is I.

SEISHIN: Who are you?

MOTOME: A passerby.

SEISHIN (*relieved*): You're only a young boy. What has happened?

MOTOME (*gasping*): I can hardly take a step with this pain. If you have some medicine would you be good enough to give me some?

SEISHIN: You took me so completely by surprise I thought you were a ghost. But you must be in terrible pain. If I had any medicine on me I would give it to you, but I have only just pulled myself. . . . Oh, I mean the nearest doctor is about two hundred yards across the river. This is a problem!

MOTOME: Oh, it's painful!

SEISHIN: Here, let me rub your chest to ease the spasms.

MOTOME: Thank you.

SEISHIN: Now, then, where does it hurt?

[ 58 ]

ACT TWO SCENE FOUR

NARRATOR: The fingers that slip under the collar of the suffering Motome contact a purse.

*Motome suffers agonies. Seishin props him up and puts his hand under the foldover collar. He feels a purse there.*

SEISHIN: What is this, young man?

MOTOME: That's my money.

SEISHIN: It seems like quite a large sum.

MOTOME: Yes. I have fifty gold pieces.

SEISHIN (*astonished*): What?

NARRATOR: At this, Seishin involuntarily releases the pressure. With a groan Motome falls back.

*Seishin is so surprised at the sum mentioned that his hand relaxes. Motome falls.*

SEISHIN: Ah! Don't bend backward! Hold on!

NARRATOR: Taking a towel, he dips it into the river for water to bring to the fainting boy.

*Seishin tends to Motome.*

SEISHIN: Young man! Young man! Don't let yourself go!

NARRATOR: He calls him back to life.

*Motome revives.*

MOTOME: I feel much better.

SEISHIN: Has the pain subsided?

MOTOME: Yes, thanks to your care.

SEISHIN: And where are you going in the dead of night with such a large sum on you?

MOTOME: Well, this precious sum is for someone my father owes an obligation to. The person is in distress. We need it by tonight, which is why I am out so late.

[ 59 ]

THE LOVE OF IZAYOI & SEISHIN

Now by bad luck an attack of cramps has delayed me. How anxiously my father must be waiting for me!

SEISHIN: So that's it! But it is dangerous to be on the road at night with money. Take a palanquin. About two hundred yards from here there is a public palanquin stand at the crossroads.

MOTOME: Thank you, I will.

NARRATOR: Motome bows and rises.

SEISHIN: By some strange fate, we were meant to exchange words under this willow tree on the banks of this river.

MOTOME: It was part of the unending chain of fate that we are linked to the current of the Inase River.

SEISHIN: However much we were fated to meet, we must, like the ice that freezes in the night and in the morning breaks . . .

MOTOME: . . . part, each to go his separate way like the waves.

SEISHIN: Whoever you may be, and wherever you are from . . .

MOTOME: . . . if fate should will it . . .

SEISHIN: . . . we will meet again.

MOTOME: Farewell.

*He starts to go.*

SEISHIN (*impulsively*): Wait.

*He plucks at Motome's sleeve.*

MOTOME: What is it?

SEISHIN: Be careful.

NARRATOR: Reluctantly, Seishin lets go of Motome's sleeve. Both are fated by the law that says "even the merest brushing of the sleeves of strangers is ordained

[ 60 ]

ACT TWO SCENE FOUR

is another life." They part, and Motome goes. Seishin gazes after him, and an evil thought takes shape in his breast.

*Motome exits at stage right. Alone, Seishin is lost in thought; then he exits at stage right in pursuit of Motome. There is a commotion and Motome enters running, with Seishin after him.*

NARRATOR: It is no trouble at all for Seishin to overtake Motome and remove the purse. Motome seizes his hand.

MOTOME (*panic-stricken*): You can't mean to take this money!

SEISHIN (*desperately*): You are shocked. But it was fate that I should have discovered the money when I helped you ease the pain. I know this is evil. I have reproved myself. But the thought persisted and I must use force. I know I am asking the unreasonable but resign yourself to having been trapped by a villain, and lend me the money.

MOTOME (*aghast*): What? Then your kindness and sympathy were all a deception to steal this from me?

SEISHIN: Not at first. I was sincere when I nursed you. There you were, a young lad suffering in the rain. But it was just your misfortune to have money on you. If you did not, I would not have fallen prey to temptation. Those high-living people in the boat make me envious of their way of life. You will no doubt think me a demon, a priest going against the true path, wicked and inhuman. But let me fall into the bottomless hell for condemned priests. I want to live to the full and taste the joys of the Pure Land in this world. It's no good your appealing to reason. I must have the money.

MOTOME (*fiercely*): And you expect me to hand it to you?

[ 61 ]

THE LOVE OF IZAYOI & SEISHIN

NARRATOR: Drawing his sword he slashes without warning. Seishin skillfully takes the blow with Motome's umbrella. As they parry and dodge, the sounds of revelry are heard again.

*Motome unsheathes a short sword and swings at Seishin who parries with the umbrella. At the end of the narrator's line, a gay song is heard in the boat. Seishin runs toward stage left. Motome cuts off a pile at a sharp angle. Seishin strikes down Motome's sword and knocks the wind out of him. Motome staggers downstage, collapses over the pile with the knife edge, and cuts his throat.*

MOTOME: Murder! Murder!

SEISHIN: It's now or never.

NARRATOR: There is no response. Seishin is unaware that the boy is dying and snatches at the purse that had brought the two together in a fateful encounter. The drawstring catches around Motome's neck and sends him into the throes of death. Sad is the end of one so young. He is like a bud that falls.

SEISHIN: Here, lad! Speak! What? Dead? Oh!

*He is aghast. Samisen and flute music.*

SEISHIN (*in anguish*): This money no longer serves the purpose for which I wanted it. Izayoi's father could have used it for her funeral, but how will money gained by murder give her soul any rest?

*He casts the money aside. He sees Motome's sword.*

SEISHIN: There's the answer! Izayoi still guides me from her grave. Die by the sword, she says, if not by drown-

[ 62 ]

ACT TWO SCENE FOUR

ing. Look, lad, I will die by your sword in atonement. Then to the land of the dead with you and Izayoi. That is my penance. Yes, that's the way!

*Seishin prepares to rip open his belly. A full moon emerges from behind a cloud. Now Seishin shows his true colors.*

SEISHIN: But wait a moment. Who knows that Izayoi has drowned? Or that I killed this boy for his money? Only the moon and I. A man lives only fifty years. If all goes well, he prospers ten or twenty years at most. Money opens doors even for a man in rags. If it's all the same, you might as well live as though there were no tomorrow—like those people. Whether I take the life of one man or a thousand, I have only one life to give. I've made the plunge into crime. Now what shall I be? A thief, a housebreaker. I will live in luxury on what belongs to others. Whatever possessed me to think that I wanted to die?

NARRATOR: Seishin suffers a swift change of heart. This is the birth of Seikichi the Demon Thief about whom men tell tales.

*Seishin throws the sword into the river and picks up Motome.*

SEISHIN: Now for a water burial.

*He throws Motome into the river. Rain falls.*

SEISHIN: Ah! Rain again.

*A temple bell tolls. Hakuren and Izayoi enter at stage left under an umbrella. He carries a lantern. They bump into Seishin. Hakuren puts out the lantern. Rapid plucking on one note on the samisen—a*

[ 63 ]

THE LOVE OF IZAYOI & SEISHIN

*convention in scenes of suspense. Startled, Seishin drops the purse.*

HAKUREN: What was that?

SEISHIN: Ah!

*In stylized, choreographed movements, they grope about for the money. Sanji the boatman comes in between Seishin and Hakuren. He stumbles across the purse and picks it up.*

SANJI (overjoyed): This feels like a lot more than a hundred coppers!

*Seishin snatches the bag away. Sanji grapples with him but Seishin knocks the wind out of him with a strong blow. Hakuren leads Izayoi by the hand and starts toward the runway. With the purse between his teeth, Seishin flips Sanji over. At the same moment Hakuren shifts the umbrella from one hand to the other. On this cue, the end-of-act clappers are struck offstage. Seishin raises the bag of money to his forehead and grins ferociously.*

*Hakuren and Izayoi exit down the runway. To rapid beats on the clappers and drum, and to gay samisen music, the curtain is drawn.*

[ 64 ]

ACT FOUR SCENE ONE

Time: A month later.

*The scene: the anteroom of Izayoi's house in Hase Lane. She is now Hakuren's concubine.*

*At stage center is the raised set of an apartment. Upstage is an entrance curtained off with printed cotton. Two samisen are hung on the walls. At stage left an apartment is fitted with paper sliding doors. Downstage at right is a gate. Stage right is the entrance into an alley. Mokusuke, the manservant, who is the magistrate Terasawa in disguise, is chopping some duck bones on a block of wood. Nearby, Sanji looks on smoking a pipe. The curtain is drawn to a song accompanied by samisen, drum, and flute.*

SANJI: You're busy, aren't you, Mokusuke?

MOKUSUKE: These are for me, so it's no trouble at all. The Master and his mistress get the breasts and other parts. The bones and skin come down to Yone and me.

[ 65 ]

THE LOVE OF IZAYOI & SEISHIN

*convention in scenes of suspense. Startled, Seishin drops the purse.*

HAKUREN: What was that?

SEISHIN: Ah!

*In stylized, choreographed movements, they grope about for the money. Sanji the boatman comes in between Seishin and Hakuren. He stumbles across the purse and picks it up.*

SANJI (overjoyed): This feels like a lot more than a hundred coppers!

*Seishin snatches the bag away. Sanji grapples with him but Seishin knocks the wind out of him with a strong blow. Hakuren leads Izayoi by the hand and starts toward the runway. With the purse between his teeth, Seishin flips Sanji over. At the same moment Hakuren shifts the umbrella from one hand to the other. On this cue, the end-of-act clappers are struck offstage. Seishin raises the bag of money to his forehead and grins ferociously.*

*Hakuren and Izayoi exit down the runway. To rapid beats on the clappers and drum, and to gay samisen music, the curtain is drawn.*

[ 64 ]

---

ACT FOUR SCENE ONE

---

Time: A month later.

*The scene: the anteroom of Izayoi's house in Hase Lane. She is now Hakuren's concubine.*

*At stage center is the raised set of an apartment. Upstage is an entrance curtained off with printed cotton. Two samisen are hung on the walls. At stage left an apartment is fitted with paper sliding doors. Downstage at right is a gate. Stage right is the entrance into an alley. Mokusuke, the manservant, who is the magistrate Terasawa in disguise, is chopping some duck bones on a block of wood. Nearby, Sanji looks on smoking a pipe. The curtain is drawn to a song accompanied by samisen, drum, and flute.*

SANJI: You're busy, aren't you, Mokusuke?

MOKUSUKE: These are for me, so it's no trouble at all. The Master and his mistress get the breasts and other parts. The bones and skin come down to Yone and me.

[ 65 ]



THE LOVE OF IZA YOI & SEISHIN

SANJI (*enviously*): You lucky dog! So you're going to pick at these with the good-looking Yone, eh? Hmmm. A cozy meal for two. That's a heap of bones for one bird, isn't it?

MOKUSUKE: Well, I left as much meat as I could, seeing as we were going to get them.

SANJI: I wouldn't mind having some myself.

*Hempuku, a haiku poet, dressed for calling with a wooden sword; and Ginschichi, a second-hand furniture dealer, got up like a haiku poet, come up the runway toward the stage.*

GINSHICHI (*self-consciously*): Tell me, Master Hempuku, do I look like haiku poet in my get up?

HEMPUKU (*half-heartedly*): Don't you worry about that. I swear you do. Nobody would take you for anything else. There's no danger of your being unmasked.

GINSHICHI (*still worried*): I only hope no one will show me up for what I am—a second-hand furniture dealer.

HEMPUKU: Just leave everything to me.

GINSHICHI: Anyway, what interests me more is the fact that Hakuren is a rich man and has a pretty mistress.

HEMPUKU: He's a very understanding man. You won't lose anything by knowing him.

GINSHICHI: Well, then, let's be on our way.

*They continue to the stage.*

HEMPUKU: Hello, is the master at home?

MOKUSUKE: Oh, it's you, Hempuku. Yes, he is. Come in.

HEMPUKU: We're in luck. Follow me, sir.

GINSHICHI: Thank you.

[ 66 ]

ACT FOUR SCENE ONE

*They enter the anteroom. Sanji sees them.*

SANJI: Well, it's you, Hempuku.

HEMPUKU: Ah, Sanji! How is fishing these days?

SANJI: What with this south wind the fish have gone upstream quite a ways.

GINSHICHI (*trying to be witty*): When the whitefish begin to carry eggs they're no good, are they?

*He says this in a high-pitched voice.*

MOKUSUKE (*offended*): I say, Hempuku, who is that person with the peculiar voice?

HEMPUKU: This is a friend of mine, a well-known poet. I brought him along to introduce him to Hakuren.

GINSHICHI (*clumsily*): I want to make the acquaintance of the master and bask in the presence of the beautiful mistress.

HEMPUKU (*upset*): Here, don't carry on so.

GINSHICHI: Is the junk-dealer showing?

HEMPUKU (*covering*): Ahem! Oh, a duck dish, eh, Mokusuke? That's tasty, but give me sliced raw flounder any day. I even like it a day old.

GINSHICHI (*blundering on*): Right you are! When you eat it with horseradish, your nose stings and tears fall.

MOKUSUKE (*earnestly*): Talk about tears! Let me tell you about prices for ducks around here. They're so cheap where I come from. There are a lot of them quacking away in the pond in the back, but Shinkô the fisherman sold me this today for a small fortune.

SANJI: Don't blame him. He just took advantage of your simple-mindedness.

GINSHICHI: Innocence in a woman is charming, but in a man....

[ 67 ]

THE LOVE OF IZAYOI & SEISHIN

HEMPUKU: An excellent observation!

*Izayoi's maid Yone enters. She is dressed in the garb of a servant girl, and carries a dish.*

YONE: Oh, sirs, you are welcome.

HEMPUKU: Ah, Yone, a happy New Year to you.

YONE: The same to you, sir.

MOKUSUKE: Well, Yone, do you want something?

YONE: Master said to bring the bones over when you've chopped them up.

MOKUSUKE: What? He wants these? But he never did before.

YONE: He doesn't usually, but he wants them tonight.

MOKUSUKE: He must have seen me leave all this meat on. Crime will out!

SANJI (*slyly*): Well, you got cheated, didn't you?

MOKUSUKE: Confound it!

HEMPUKU, GINSHICHI, SANJI: That is very kind of him.

YONE: Master told me to tell you to go inside. Hempuku, Ginshichi, Sanji: That is very kind of him.

SANJI: Well, let's feast on the bones Mokusuke took so much pains to chop up!

MOKUSUKE: Oh, do what you like!

GINSHICHI: I'm more interested in the doxy.

HEMPUKU: Stop prattling.

YONE: Please go in, gentlemen.

SANJI: Shall we?

HEMPUKU: After you.

*They all go inside. Mokusuke is left alone.*

[ 68 ]

ACT FOUR SCENE ONE

MOKUSUKE: I went to all that trouble for what I thought would be a good meal. But after they get through with it there won't be even a mouthful for me. All I can do now is lick the chopping board.

*He looks resentfully at the block. At this point, Ofuji, Hakuren's wife, dressed in the costume of a townsman's wife, comes up the runway. She is attended by her maid Tora.*

OFUJI: I think you were right, Tora. My husband must be at Izayoi's place.

TORA (*with hostility*): Really, what a horrid master to leave you guarding the nest alone night after night! Why don't you break into their bedroom and have it out with her. It's because you are so good-hearted that this has happened.

OFUJI: I'm going to speak my mind tonight. That's why I've asked you to come to back me up.

TORA (*confidently*): I can trounce any woman I care to. Come, let's hurry.

*They come to the stage. Tora opens the gate.*

TORA: Mokusuke! Mokusuke!

MOKUSUKE: Coming, coming. Who is it? Why, it's Tora of the main house.

TORA: Madam is here.

MOKUSUKE: What? She is? Oh, please come in! *Ofuji enters.*

OFUJI: Tell me, Mokusuke. Master is here isn't he?

MOKUSUKE: Yes. No. He is not here.

TORA (*officially*): What do you mean he isn't? He's been

[ 69 ]

away from home for all of three days. Where else could he go? Out with it!

MOKUSUKE: But I've told you the truth. He is not here.

OFUJI (*placatingly*): Well, if you say so, I won't argue with you. But listen, Mokusuke, I am worried about him. He has hardly finished making the round of New Year's visits when he decides to stay out and not come home. Now I haven't enough to do, and the house seems deserted. I have a favor to ask of you. Can you see your way to granting it?

MOKUSUKE: Well, I can't say until you tell me what it is.

OFUJI: Well, the favor I have in mind is . . . •

*She takes his hand. Mokusuke is shocked by this intimacy and frees himself.*

MOKUSUKE (*righteously*): No, I can't grant you that favor.

OFUJI: Why not?

MOKUSUKE: Isn't it obvious? I am a poor servant earning only two gold pieces and two silver pieces a year. I've just put in a year's service. Until I put in three years faithfully, I won't be earning seven gold pieces and two silver. How can you ask me to be your lover?

TORA (*shocked*): Don't be impertinent! Why should Madam suggest such a thing?

MOKUSUKE (*relieved*): Oh! She doesn't want me for her lover? Well, then, I will listen to her request.

*Ofuji wraps a coin in paper.*

OFUJI: This is only a trifle, Mokusuke. It's a New Year's gift from me. Buy yourself some tobacco with it.

*He unwraps the paper.*

MOKUSUKE (*beside himself*): Oh! One silver piece! What

will I do with all the tobacco this will buy? I get mine for eight coppers.

TORA (*exasperated*): What a clod you are! It doesn't make any difference what you buy with it. It's a present from Madam.

MOKUSUKE: Then I will remit this to my home in the country. (*Suspiciously*.) It couldn't be counterfeit. though, could it?

TORA: Do you think for a moment that Madam would give you a counterfeit coin?

MOKUSUKE: Being too generous raises my suspicions.

OFUJI (*matter-of-factly*): Well, Mokusuke, my request shouldn't surprise you. Tell me truthfully: since when has my husband been here?

MOKUSUKE: All right. I'll tell. My lips were sealed, but your gift compels me to speak. The truth is that he has been here the day before yesterday, and oh, my, I have never seen such goings-on! Why, even before sundown they . . .

*He stops after glancing at Ofuji.*

TORA (*urging him on*): There's no need for niceties at a time like this. Speak frankly.

MOKUSUKE (*peevishly*): They're going to grind me down to a fine powder with their demands. It's "Go to Yohan for special dishes." "Go to the bean-curd shop." "We're all out of wine." It's a feat every night.

TORA: What a burden to be used like that. After they have wine, Master and she . . .

MOKUSUKE: Yes, he and the mistress . . .

TORA: Oh, you make me angry! Call her "the doxy"!

MOKUSUKE: The doxy and Master . . .

TORA (*consumed with prurient curiosity*): Do what?

MOKUSUKE (*casually*): I think I'll have some tobacco first.

*He smokes. Tora turns to Ofuji.*

TORA: Madam, did you hear that? Doesn't that infuriate you?

OFUJI: Izayoi was once a prostitute. She must be familiar with what men call "techniques."

TORA: Oh, the more I hear the angrier I get. What did I tell you, Madam? You are put in such a position because, despite my advice, you have not complained, talking about a woman's place and woman's modesty. I'm vexed on your account!

*She seizes Mokusuke by his collar and flings him about.*

MOKUSUKE: Oh, watch out! You'll crush my adam's apple! Let me go! Let me go!

TORA: All right, I will, but go on with your story.

MOKUSUKE: There is no more to tell.

TORA: Even you dare make fools of us! Master is also a fool! Why is he so stuck on the other one? You'd think they were two prawns fried in batter!

MOKUSUKE: I can't say I blame him. Madam and mistress are like a mud-turtle and the moon.

TORA: You mean me, don't you? I am the mud-turtle.

OFUJI (*calmly*): You needn't defend me, Tora. Even in Mokusuke's eyes Izayoi is as different from me as the moon is from a mud-turtle. I don't think my husband's infatuation is unreasonable. But when he does not come home, it is the duty of the wife to remonstrate, even if it hurts his feelings, for the sake of the family.

TORA (*egging her on*): Don't hold anything back now.

OFUJI (*uneasily*): But if I did speak out people will secretly call me a terrible, jealous woman.

TORA: But you must speak up.

OFUJI: Anyway, everything in its own good time. Mokusuke, lend us your room for a while.

MOKUSUKE: If you don't mind a filthy place, hide there.

OFUJI: We won't mind, Mokusuke.

MOKUSUKE: Very well, Madam.

*Ofuji looks toward the interior of the house.*

OFUJI (*with fury*): Oh, the more I think of it. . .

*Then she controls herself.*

OFUJI: Show us the way, Mokusuke.

*The three exit toward the left of the anteroom. Music. The stage revolves, and the next scene follows immediately.*

IV. 2

Time: immediately following.

*The scene: an interior. The set is raised off the stage floor. Upstage center are an alcove with a writing table and a chest of drawers on its right. There are sliding doors papered with silver foil and decorated with ink paintings. At stage left is an apartment fitted with paper sliding doors, with a stone wash basin in front. Next to it is a bamboo fence with grass, a plum tree, and a rustic garden gate. On both sides, at stage rear, a fence of split bamboo is visible. Hakuren and his three guests are seated at a banquet. Large*

*trays, platters, and bowls are set out. The maid Yone is pouring wine. Music is played until the revolving stage comes to rest.*

HEMPUKU: By the way, Hakuren, I have brought along a friend of mine who is very keen on haiku.

HAKUREN: I am very glad you did. Please consider me your friend.

GINSHICHI: I hope you will be as kind to me as you have been to Hempuku.

HAKUREN: And what is your name?

GINSHICHI (*flustered*): Well, uh, it's Takara Kikaku.

HAKUREN (*surprised*): What? You? The famous haiku poet?

HEMPUKU (*annoyed*): No, no. He means that he is a disciple of Takarai Kikaku.

GINSHICHI: Yes, and I call myself Marui Shikaku after my master.

HAKUREN: That's an unusual name, isn't it? Round Square.

SANJI (*musingly*): But it doesn't fit him, does it? Look at his face. It is long and dented in the middle—like a spoon.

YONE (*laughing*): You look like the actor Kichiroku.

GINSHICHI (*upset*): You are sticking the wrong label on me.

HEMPUKU (*in an undertone*): That's enough.

SANJI: By the way, what has happened to Izayoi?

HEMPUKU: You're right. She is taking a long time.

GINSHICHI: I am very anxious to make her acquaintance.

ACT FOUR SCENE TWO

HAKUREN: She is probably still reading some new books that Yasaburō, the book dealer, brought recently.

YONE: Yes, she said she would read two or three more pages.

GINSHICHI: She could not put the book down, eh? It couldn't be a new erotic book, could it? My, uh, interest is aroused.

HEMPUKU: Now don't start on your boorish puns.

HAKUREN: Well, he seems quite an expert, probably under your guidance.

HEMPUKU: I'm embarrassed.

*Izayoi enters to samisen music. She is dressed in the gaudy robes of a concubine.*

IZAYOI: Welcome, gentlemen.

HEMPUKU: Ah, Izayoi, you are as beautiful as always!

IZAYOI (*shyly*): Don't tease me, Hempuku.

*She sits down next to Hakuren.*

SANJI: Say, Izayoi, I met the matron of the Ōgiya in the bazaar in front of the Asakusa Temple a few days ago. She told me you were the only thing they were talking about at the house. Well, you know what a garrulous old crone she is. I could not get away from her. I stood prepared. But have more wine from a freshly-warmed there cornered.

IZAYOI: The next time you run into her, tell her to come and see me.

SANJI: She said she would when she visits the Katō Shrine.

HEMPUKU: By the way, Izayoi, let me introduce a friend to you.

THE LOVE OF IZAYOI & SEISHIN

GINSHICHI: My name is Marui Shikaku. I hope we will be friends.

IZAYOI: I hope so, too.

YONE: Come, gentlemen, whose cup needs refilling?

HEMPUKU: I have had enough.

IZAYOI (*apologetically*): I am afraid the meal was poorly prepared. But have more wine from a just-warmed bottle.

GINSHICHI: No, no more; and I am not just saying it out of politeness.

HAKUREN: Well, if that is the case, how about a poem from you?

GINSHICHI (*squirring*): I don't like to say no to my host, but I am a little indisposed tonight.

HEMPUKU (*sharply*): Don't give yourself such airs. Let us have a poem.

*He gets the writing table and sets it down in front of Ginshichi.*

GINSHICHI (*trapped*): Oh, what a situation!

*He struggles awkwardly at the table.*

HEMPUKU: Quickly, Master Shikaku. The opening haiku of the series.

GINSHICHI: Oh, all right!

*He thinks hard.*

GINSHICHI: Two gold pieces in silver coins at the most! *Hempuku tugs at Ginshichi's sleeve.*

HEMPUKU (*nonplussed*): Here, now, that doesn't come out to seventeen syllables!

*Ginshichi is thrown off course by figures.*

[ 76 ]

ACT FOUR SCENE TWO

GINSHICHI: Seventeen ounces? Your appraisal is off. It is too high.

HAKUREN (*lost*): What is all this? What does he mean by "high"?

HEMPUKU (*covering*): He is referring to the high price of the set of poems by nine of Master Bashō's ten disciples. They were on sale recently.

SANJI: A set of nine? What a treasure!

HEMPUKU (*impressed*): I misjudged you, Sanji. To know about the ten disciples shows some refinement.

HAKUREN: It will soon be spring, won't it, Hempuku?

GINSHICHI: How about a cup, Master Ten Disciples?

*He holds a cup out to Sanji.*

SANJI: A cup? I am much obliged. This is like going to a flower-viewing picnic before the season.

IZAYOI: Hakuren, take me to see the wisteria at Kameido and the irises at Kinogawa this year.

HAKUREN: Certainly. Let us take Sanji along and spend the whole day.

SANJI: Did you say Kameido? I would enjoy that.

GINSHICHI: What about the Azuma Shrine behind the Tenjin Shrine?

SANJI: Mention Tenjin and you remind me of a hand in the flower card game.

HEMPUKU: It would be too bad if it rained.

SANJI: Don't mention rain. In cards, the "rain card" cancels out the "flower cards."

*Hempuku's mind is still on haiku.*

HEMPUKU: I am confused.

GINSHICHI: The iris season comes a little later, doesn't it?

[ 77 ]

THE LOVE OF IZAYOI & SEISHIN

SANJI: Did I hear iris mentioned? Shall we play a hand?  
HEMPUKU: Let me break in a moment, Sanji. I know that the word "iris" is appropriate in haiku. But I don't know what "a hand" is.

SANJI: You are familiar with the game and you don't know what "a hand" means?

HEMPUKU (*earnestly*): In a haiku series there are rules about when a particular flower or the moon can be mentioned. But there are no rules about "a hand."

GINSHICHI: I never heard of it either.

HAKUREN: It seems to me that the "flowers" you two have in mind are not the same. Hempuku is thinking about haiku and Sanji about the card game. Better start all over again.

SANJI: Then we were on the wrong track all the way through?

YONE (*absent-mindedly*): Through with your meal, Sanji?

HAKUREN: You are on the wrong track again. Ha, ha, ha, ha!

*Mokusuke enters.*

MOKUSUKE: Master, Izayoi's father is here.

HAKUREN: Oh, is he?

IZAYOI: Show him into my room, Mokusuke.

MOKUSUKE: I have done just that.

HEMPUKU and GINSHICHI: We will be going, Hakuren.

SANJI: I will too.

HAKUREN: There is no need to go. Sanji, didn't you want to see me about something?

SANJI: I hate to ask you for it, but I need five gold pieces.

HAKUREN: What for?

[ 78 ]

ACT FOUR SCENE TWO

SANJI: I have to make good some gambling losses. A fox tricked me.

IZAYOI: You give me the shivers! A fox tricked you?

HEMPUKU: What kind of fox was it that could have tricked you into such a large hole?

GINSHICHI (*slyly*): I think Sanji has another kind of hole in mind — a bigger one.

SANJI: We are off on the wrong track again.

HAKUREN: Well, no matter. Here you are. Don't overdo it.

*He takes five gold pieces from his wallet, wraps it in paper, and gives it to Sanji.*

SANJI: I am grateful to you for this, Izayoi, please help me convey my thanks to Master.

*Hakuren wraps two piles of coins in paper. Mokusuke interrupts.*

HAKUREN: I am very pleased that you two came to see me. I would like you to stay and do a series of haiku. But as you just heard, Izayoi's father just arrived, so let us do that some other time. This is not much, but use it to hire palanquins to get home.

*He hands the money to Hempuku and Ginshichi.*

GINSHICHI: Oh, but this is only my first visit.

HEMPUKU: You show me the same kindness whenever I come. I am embarrassed to accept this.

HAKUREN: You need not be. I am going to ask you to judge my poems in the near future. Please accept this as payment in advance.

HEMPUKU: In that case, I will. Thank you very much. I

[ 79 ]

THE LOVE OF IZAYOI & SEISHIN

am anxious to read your poems. What about your earlier collection?

*Mokusuke interrupts.*

MOKUSUKE: Well, let me tell you, the last cord of firewood I collected was so green it wouldn't burn.

GINSHICHI: What's this nonsense? We're discussing a different matter.

MOKUSUKE: Aren't we talking about firewood and cooking?

IZAYOI: Mokusuke, you are wandering again.

YONE: Isn't he a fool?

MOKUSUKE (*sullenly*): What's so strange? He asked me about the firewood I collected, and I told him it would not burn.

HAKUREN (*dismissing him*): All right, all right. Tend to your own business.

SANJI: By the way, gentlemen, are you going to Ōiso? If you are, I will go with you.

HEMPUKU: Not to Ōiso but to Koiso to our favorite house.

SANJI: You mean to the Ōyorozi? You sly rascals!

GINSHICHI: One thing we don't like about going there is the smell from the charnel house we have to pass by.

*Mokusuke lifts the cover of the pan and shouts.*

MOKUSUKE (*overjoyed*): Oh! The bones! The bones! There is some left!

*Everyone shudders at the reference to bones.*

ALL: Mokusuke, don't startle us so!

[ 80 ]

ACT FOUR SCENE TWO

HAKUREN: It must be close to ten. If you are going to Koiso, the earlier the better.

HEMPUKU: You are right. Let us go right now. It is a deserted road.

GINSHICHI: It is not like going to Ōiso. The lonely fields are terrible to get through.

SANJI (*surprised*): But aren't you going to go by palanquin?

HEMPUKU (*matter of factly*): Nothing of the kind. How much do you think we would have left if we did that?

SANJI: You were given money for that purpose, but you are going to walk anyway, eh?

GINSHICHI (*in anticipation*): When I think of her I can go in my bare feet.

MOKUSUKE (*exasperated*): What greedy fellows!

HEMPUKU: Goodbye, Hakuren.

GINSHICHI: Goodbye, Izayoi.

IZAYOI: Have a good time.

HEMPUKU (*jokingly*): We are going to have a miserable time.

GINSHICHI: We're just going to make our partners happy.

HAKUREN: No doubt.

HEMPUKU and GINSHICHI: Ha, ha, ha, ha! Well, then, goodbye.

SANJI: Let's go.

*To samisen music the three go down the runway. Mokusuke sees them off at the gate.*

MOKUSUKE: If I never see you again, that will be too soon!

YONE: Careful, they will hear you!

[ 81 ]



THE LOVE OF IZAYOI & SEISHIN

MOKUSUKE: What if they do?

HAKUREN: Stop mumbling, Mokusuke, and call Izayoi's father here.

MOKUSUKE: Very well, sir.

IZAYOI: Yone, will you put this place in order?

YONE: Yes, mistress.

*She removes the wine bottles and the dishes.*

MOKUSUKE: Sagobei, please come in here.

*Sagobei, who is now a priest, answers offstage.*

SAGOBEL (*subdued*): If you will excuse the intrusion.

*Sagobei enters to melancholy samisen music. He is dressed as a priest, with a satchel hanging from his neck, coverings for the hands, leggings, and a bamboo basketwork hat in his hand. He goes to stage left and puts down the hat.*

SAGOBEL: Hakuren, I wish you a happy New Year.

HAKUREN: You are welcome, Sagobei. Don't stand on ceremony. Come closer.

SAGOBEL: Thank you.

IZAYOI: Father, it's good to see you again.

SAGOBEL: Ah, daughter, I see you are in good spirits. That is fine.

YONE: Please have some tea.

*She pours tea and offers it to him.*

SAGOBEL: Don't go to any trouble for me. Like all old men, Hakuren, I keep saying the same things over and over again. It's about you and Izayoi. She has been my

[ 82 ]

ACT FOUR SCENE TWO

support all these years. She sold herself into prostitution for my sake. The hardships of her life were too much for her. She escaped—and may the buddhas forgive her—attempted suicide in the Inase River. But by some miracle you rescued her. It was due to the intercession of the kind Amida who is full of pity. You told her that as life in the brothel was unbearable you would make it easier for her, and bought her out. You gave her a manservant and a maid. She has everything. She is a fortunate woman. I hope the gods will not punish her by taking her life away too soon. In good times or bad, it is the lot of the old to worry. How can I thank you enough for your kindnesses to me through my daughter? I pray to you every evening before my invocations to Amida.

*He draws out his rosary and weeps.*

HAKUREN (*deprecatingly*): There you go again. I wish you would stop. I would have saved anyone in that situation. That is my nature. I knew Izayoi. Would I have let her die? You need feel no obligation to me. Your fulsome thanks every time we meet embarrass me. Our relationships are all fixed in a previous existence.

IZAYOI: It has been a truly strange bond. You have been so kind to us since I came here a month ago. Please thank him warmly, father.

SAGOBEL: You don't have to tell me that. I cannot express my gratitude sufficiently.

*He sheds tears of happiness.*

SAGOBEL (*embarrassed*): In the old, tears are not far away from the surface, whether at sad or happy occasions.

*He wipes away his tears.*

MOKUSUKE (*realistically*): Doesn't your nose drip first?

YONE: You keep out of it.

[ 83 ]

THE LOVE OF IZAYOI & SEISHIN

SAGOBEL: That's all right. Mokusuke is right, you know.

HAKUREN: Why have you decided to become a priest?

SAGOBEL: I must pray for the repose of someone's soul.

IZAYOI: For whom, father?

SAGOBEL (*instinctively*): Your brother . . .

IZAYOI: What was that?

SAGOBEL (*covering*): I mean your mother, who died the year before last. I pray for her soul and spend all my time at devotions. Thanks to your charity I lack for nothing. All I do is visit holy places every day. It is an easy life.

IZAYOI: You are dressed for travel. Where are you going?

SAGOBEL: Since it is turning warm, I thought I would go on a pilgrimage to Zenkō Temple. I came to thank you and say goodbye.

HAKUREN: To Zenkō? That is commendable, but that area is known for its heavy snows. If I were you I would wait until the third month.

SAGOBEL: I expect they have cleared away most of the snow from the roads.

MOKUSUKE: That's what you think. When it comes to snow in my country, it doesn't start melting until the fifth month. When you cry or sniffle as you did just now, you will have icicles hanging from your face.

HAKUREN: There goes Mokusuke again with his exaggerated half-truths when he boasts about his native place. Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha.

*A bell tolls ten o'clock.*

SAGOBEL: Is it ten already? I think I will be going.

IZAYOI: I hear it is unsafe in the streets these days. Stay overnight with us.

[ 84 ]

ACT FOUR SCENE TWO

HAKUREN: Yes, you must. Start out from here tomorrow morning. It would be safer.

SAGOBEL: Then I will impose myself upon you.

YONE: You have made a wise decision.

SAGOBEL (*in a low voice*): Speaking about how unsafe it is outside, I hear that the thief they call "the Demon" has broken into several houses. And they still haven't arrested the robber who got into Paradise Temple last year and made off with the three thousand gold pieces that the shogun gave to the temple. He is a clever fellow, whoever he is.

*Hakuren gives a guilty start. Mokusuke, the disguised magistrate, observes him.*

HAKUREN: I am sure the thief has got to Kyoto or Kyushu by now.

SAGOBEL: In any case, my advice to you is to be careful. You are rich.

IZAYOI: This talk makes me shiver.

MOKUSUKE (*enigmatically*): The thing about thieves is that there is no telling who is one.

HAKUREN: Eh?

MOKUSUKE (*innocently*): Oh, nothing. Well Sagobei, will you join me in a cup in the kitchen?

SAGOBEL (*relieved*): I would like nothing better. With you, I will not be so uncomfortable, and the wine will taste so much better.

MOKUSUKE: By the way, do you like duck bones?

SAGOBEL: No, I am observing a strict abstinence.

MOKUSUKE: Capital! Then I get them all.

SAGOBEL: Goodnight, Hakuren.

[ 85 ]

THE LOVE OF IZAYOI & SEISHIN

HAKUREN: Get a good night's rest.

SAGOBEL: Thank you for your hospitality.

*Sagobei and Mokusuke exit to samisen music.*

YONE: It is already ten. Shall I lay out the bedding?

IZAYOI: Please do so. Hakuren, while Yone is getting our room ready, come sit by me.

HAKUREN (*not displeased*): You are in a hurry to get to bed, aren't you?

*Yone goes into the apartment at stage left. Izayoi lights a pipe for Hakuren.*

HAKUREN: It's cold tonight. I think I will go to bed without changing.

IZAYOI: That's a good idea.

*Yone enters.*

YONE: It is ready now.

*Hakuren and Izayoi remove their cloaks, tie on narrow sashes, and prepare for bed. Yone bows to them.*

YONE: Good night.

*She exits to samisen music.*

IZAYOI: Come, let us go to bed.

*Izayoi rises. Hakuren looks at Izayoi.*

HAKUREN (*puzzled*): Am I mistaken, Izayoi, or is your waist thickening?

IZAYOI: Oh!

*Startled, she conceals her waist with her sleeves.*

IZAYOI (*flustered*): I have never had a slim waist.

[ 86 ]

ACT FOUR SCENE TWO

*She avoids looking at Hakuren. They disappear into the bedroom, Hakuren looking doubtfully at Izayoi. Mokusuke enters and looks about. He stealthily lifts a short sword from its stand in the alcove, unsheaths it, and studies it intently by the light. He nods, slips it in the scabbard, and replaces it on the stand. He goes to stage right.*

MOKUSUKE (*as though to himself*): I was sure there was some wine left around here.

*He looks around and exits. The time passes. A temple bell tolls the hour, and quiet samisen music is played. Izayoi comes out from the bedroom and throws a cloak over her shoulders. She rinses her hands at the stone basin in the garden. She brings out a memorial tablet, a rosary, and an incense burner from the chest of drawers and places them on the table. She pours water in a bowl and presses her hands together in prayer.*

IZAYOI: I pray that Seishin will attain buddhahood and nirvana. Hail to Amida Buddha. Hail to Amida Buddha.

*She prays. Hakuren spies on her through the apartment door. Simultaneously, Ofuji watches her from the interior.*

HAKUREN (*brusquely*): Why the prayers, Izayoi?

IZAYOI: Oh!

*She is startled, and attempts to put away the devotional objects.*

HAKUREN (*calmly*): There is no need to do that.

[ 87 ]

THE LOVE OF IZAYOI & SEISHIN

IZAYOI: But . . . .

HAKUREN: You have my permission.

*He enters the room.*

IZAYOI: Forgive me.

*She breaks down and weeps.*

HAKUREN: Every night, after you made sure I was asleep, you have been slipping out of bed to pray for someone's soul. Who is it—your mother, brother, or someone you promised to be true to while you were in the quarter? Be frank with me.

*Hakuren lights a pipe.*

IZAYOI: I have kept this from you, but now that you know, there is no reason to conceal it any longer. I will tell you everything.

*Samisen music with Chinese fiddle is played.*

IZAYOI: This tablet is for the man I promised to love in this world and the next. His name was Seishin and he was a monk. He was arrested for going to the quarter and was banished. I was then with his child. I knew I could not be at the brothel very long and escaped. I was desperate. I made up my mind to die with him—to make our way over the Hill of the Dead and the Sanzu River—since we could not be together in this world. We threw ourselves into the Inase River. You saved me. You paid off my debt to the quarter. I cannot repay you for your kindness, or for your charity to my father. I thought that the least I could do to requite such generosity was to conceal my condition and serve you in the bedchamber. Since you had spent a fortune on my account, I was yours to do with as you pleased. But in my heart all the time I was as a nun, loyal to the dead Seishin. And for the day when I would ask you fo

[88]

ACT FOUR SCENE TWO

permission to make a pilgrimage to various temples in the country, I made myself a set of nuns' robes. Here they are.

*She takes out from a drawer a white undergarment, a black robe, shields for the hands, and leggings. Ofuji weeps. Hakuren is touched. He puts down his pipe.*

HAKUREN: I am moved by your fidelity. How true the words of that Shinnai tune are: "I was blind to facts when I said that in the hearts of courtesans there was no sincerity. They were the words of a churl and a fool." I do not know what kind of man Seishin was, but he is fortunate to be so loved. How unhappy you must have been to sleep with me out of a sense of duty. I feel no desire for you now. I will act like a man: I give you permission to go.

IZAYOI (*unbelieving*): Am I free to go?

HAKUREN: You are indeed. When you become a nun, spend all your time in prayer for your husband.

IZAYOI: Oh, thank you.

*Sagobei enters, wiping away tears.*

SAGOBEBI: I heard everything from the next room. We are even deeper in your debt now. How can I express my gratitude?

HAKUREN: Money is to be had for the asking, but this fidelity is not to be bought for all the money in the world.

SAGOBEBI: She is undeserving of such praise. Izayoi, you are too good to be a daughter of mine. How happy Seishin must be in his grave!

IZAYOI: Now I can set out with head high. There is no

[ 89 ]

THE LOVE OF IZAYOI & SEISHIN

time like the present. I will cut off my hair and become a nun tonight.

SAGOBEL: A good idea. Seishin died on this same day though in another month. I cannot read the sutras, but I am dressed like a monk. I will shave your head for you.

IZAYOI: May I trouble you, father?

HAKUREN (*suddenly dismayed*): Then you are renouncing the world so soon?

IZAYOI: Since I have your permission, yes.

SAGOBEL: It has been her long-cherished desire to serve the Buddha.

HAKUREN: Still it is a pity to see you lose your glossy black hair.

SAGOBEL (*sadly*): When it is gone she will lose the symbol of her beauty.

IZAYOI (*with no regret*): But I will become a new nun, as fresh as the green willow tree.

HAKUREN: I wish you good health, my new nun.

IZAYOI: Hakuren . . .

HAKUREN: Izayoi . . .

*They look at each other, full of emotion.*

SAGOBEL: Well then, I will apply the razor.

*A song is sung offstage. Weeping, Sagobei takes Izayoi by the hand. Izayoi exits with the nun's garments. Ofuji breaks out in a sob. Hakuren is startled.*

HAKUREN: Who is that?

OFUJI: It is I.

HAKUREN: Ofuji? What are you doing here?

*Ofuji enters.*

[ 90 ]

ACT FOUR SCENE TWO

OFUJI (*remorsefully*): I came secretly this evening because you had deserted me. I came to take out my anger on the woman who had seduced you. But Izayoi's fidelity was something I had not expected. When I heard her speak of her determination to remain faithful to her lover and to become a nun at her tender age, my resentment vanished. Now I feel as though she were my niece or sister, and I cannot help but love her. Please forgive me for nagging you all this time. I did not know the circumstances.

HAKUREN (*ill at ease*): I think you had some justification for your jealous outbursts. But as you have gathered, she has few friends. This may sound like an excuse, but I was placed in a situation of having to look after her when I saved her life. It was not only because of sexual passion on my part. You can be sure that I will leave this house and spend all my time at home from now on.

*Tora enters.*

TORA (*triumphant*): How happy you must be, Madam. With the doxy a baldpated nun, the situation is well in hand. I am so glad for you I can hardly contain myself.

OFUJI: What's this? What has come over you? I do not want Izayoi to overhear you and think I agree with you. I could not face her. Be a little more prudent in what you say.

TORA (*puzzled*): I do not understand, Madam. Did you not say to me, "Tora, speak out for me as I am too timid to do so."?

OFUJI: Why must you insist on speaking? Be quiet!

TORA: But you said . . .

OFUJI: You will still talk back to your mistress, will you? Hakuren, our maid is most impertinent. Let us dismiss her in the third month.

[ 91 ]

TORA: What have I done wrong?

*Mokusuke and Yone enter.*

MOKUSUKE (*tearfully*): Master, master! My mistress has become a nun. What a pity! I do not think there will be another like her. I am clumsy, and Master is always after me. But mistress intercedes for me all the time. Not only that, but she offers me all of the left-over wine and dishes. I know she is going on a pilgrimage, but that does not console me.

YONE: I am just as sorrowful as Mokusuke here. I am so stupid, yet mistress used to tell me to do things for her and was kind to me.

MOKUSUKE: You are sad, too, are you? I am heartbroken.

*They weep.*

HAKUREN: I understand your feelings. I may seem to be without feelings, but even if I do not weep as you do, I am every bit as melancholy. I have felt regret at parting from a woman I was not especially fond of. Think what it is like in Izayoi's case.

*He glances at Ofuji and stops.*

HAKUREN: You must not take offence, Ofuji. Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha!

*Sagobei speaks offstage.*

SAGOBEL: You are ready now, daughter. Come quickly.

*Sagobei enters, followed by Izayoi in a nun's black habit and light-blue head covering. She goes to stage right, sits down, and looks down shyly.*

SAGOBEL: I have turned her into a nun, Hakuren.

IZAYOI (*gratefully*): Thanks to you, Hakuren, I have abandoned the world.

*They all look at Izayoi and weep.*

HAKUREN: Ofuji, look: in the twinkling of an eye, and without regret, she has renounced the world.

OFUJI: I was moved by your confession and your desire to become a nun.

IZAYOI: Those words are like a balm for someone you should resent.

SAGOBEL: This looks like a good time to make my request.

Madam, what would you think of becoming a sister to Izayoi?

OFUJI (*eagerly*): Nothing would please me more. Let us not delay a minute. We shall exchange wine cups here and now.

SAGOBEL and IZAYOI: You do not object?

OFUJI: Tora, bring me a wine cup.

TORA: Yes, Madam.

*She brings a wine cup and a bottle. Ofuji takes up the cup.*

OFUJI: Since I am the elder, I will drink first.

*She holds out the cup. Tora pours. Ofuji drinks and hands the cup to Izayoi. Izayoi drinks from it.*

IZAYOI: May I offer you the cup in return?

*She hands it to Ofuji, who drinks from it.*

OFUJI: This makes us sisters from today.

SAGOBEL: My wish has been granted.

SAGOBEL and IZAYOI: Thank you.

THE LOVE OF IZAYOI & SEISHIN

IZAYOI: Oh, here are some things I would like to give you for services rendered, and also as keepsakes.

*She brings out from under her collar a hairpin wrapped in paper which she gives to Yone, and a comb which she gives to Tora.*

IZAYOI: They are old but still usable. I have nothing that a man can use, so to Mokusuke I give a small amount.

*She hands him a packet of money.*

YONE: A keepsake? You are most kind.

TORA (*dumfounded*): For me, too? I do not deserve this.

MOKUSUKE: You should not have done this. Money again. Should I buy tobacco?

YONE: Anything you like. It is a parting gift from mistress.

MOKUSUKE: Thank you....

MOKUSUKE, YONE, TORA: ...very much!

IZAYOI: When you think of me say a prayer for me.

*Mokusuke, Yone, and Tora burst into tears.*

SAGOBEL: Come, daughter, we must go.

HAKUREN: Wait a moment, old man. You two are starting out on a pious journey. Let me give you a trifling parting gift.

*He takes some coins from his purse, wraps them up, and gives them to Sagobei.*

SAGOBEL: But I cannot....

HAKUREN: It will be a long journey and you will need travelling expenses.

SAGOBEL: You think of everything.

SAGOBEL and IZAYOI: Thank you.

[ 94 ]

ACT FOUR SCENE TWO

OFUJI: I can only offer you rice with red beans on a happy occasion like this. Won't you consider starting out after a ceremony tomorrow morning?

IZAYOI: You are very kind, but I would be embarrassed at being seen.

OFUJI: I hear that you are pregnant. I will be anxious about you. When you settle down somewhere, send me news.

IZAYOI: I promise I will.

SAGOBEL: Well then, daughter.

IZAYOI, SAGOBEL: May you all be in good health.

HAKUREN: You too.

MOKUSUKE: We will wait for....

HAKUREN, OFUJI, et al: ...your return to Kamakura.

*Sagobei and Izayoi step down and start for the gate. A temple bell tolls.*

SAGOBEL (*solemnly*): We now leave you to start a long pilgrimage.

IZAYOI (*sadly*): This may be a parting forever.

HAKUREN: I think of a fragile cherry blossom and its cruel fate.

MOKUSUKE: I think of it in full bloom.

OFUJI: Even without a wind in the night....

IZAYOI: ...it will scatter in all directions, just as I, in my black robe, will wander.

SAGOBEL: Show Hakuren how you have changed.

*He slips off Izayoi's head covering and reveals her shaven head.*

HAKUREN: Admirable!

[ 95 ]