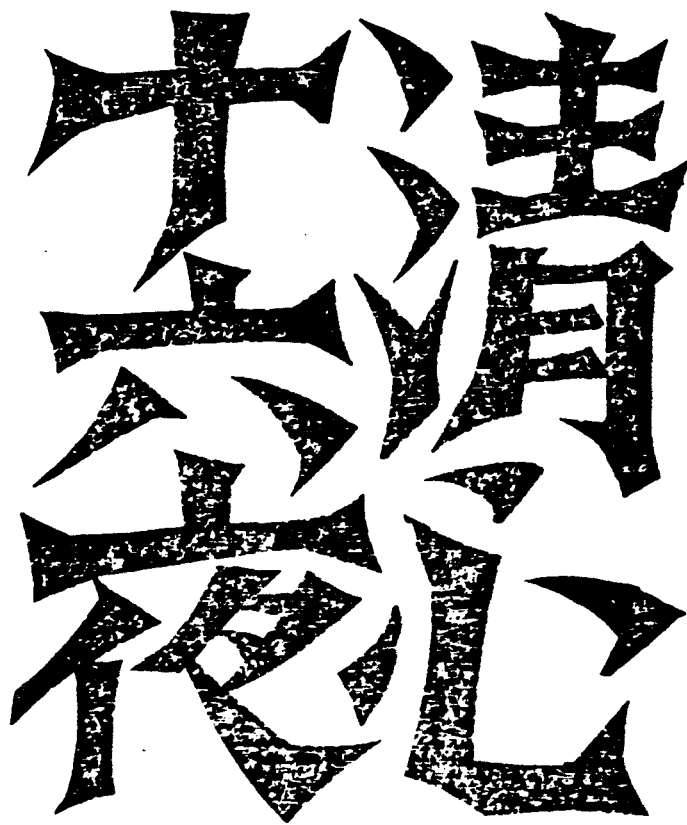


A Kabuki Play by Kawatake Mokuami

THE LOVE OF
IZAYOI & SEISHIN

Translated by Frank T. Motofuji



Act 6 Scene 1 →
end
pp. 96-172

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

1966

THE LOVE OF IZAYOI & SEISHIN

He and Izayoi look at each other.

IZAYOI: Oh!

She is embarrassed and covers her head with Sagobei's hat of woven bamboo. At this cue, the clappers are struck.

IZAYOI: I am ashamed!

Izayoi peers at Hakuren from under the hat. Hakuren, deeply touched, turns to Ofuji. They all freeze in a tableau. To the tolling of the hour of dawn, the cawing of crows, and samisen music, the curtain is drawn.

ACT SIX SCENE ONE

Time: One year later. Evening.

The scene: the interior of Hakuren's residence at Yukinoshita. The house is raised off the stage floor on a riser of clay and plaited bamboo. The central room is fitted with paper sliding doors and an openwork transom. Upstage center is a arched doorway with a recessed cupboard to its left and a brown wall with a papered skirt to its right. At stage left is an apartment with sliding walls of paper on wooden grills. There is a roofed gate. At downstage right is an entrance hall nine feet wide with a wooden door. Near it is hung a large paper lantern emblazoned with a family crest. The curtain is drawn to lively music. Nihachi, a noodle vendor, is setting down his small hand-lantern, and behind him, Donsichi and Kanroku, friends from neighboring tenements, are putting their gong and drum on the ground.

THE LOVE OF IZAYOI & SEISHIN

NIHACHI: Is anybody at home?

DONSHICHI and KANROKU: Anybody home?

NIHACHI: Nobody seems to be in.

DONSHICHI: It looks as though they haven't replaced your daughter Tora after she disappeared over two nights ago.

KANROKU: These people must be very shorthanded right now.

NIHACHI: Anyway, let us try once more.

NIHACHI, DONSHICHI, KANROKU: Anybody home?

Mokusuke says "Coming!" and enters from the interior.

MOKUSUKE: Oh, it's Nihachi, Tora's father.

NIHACHI: Ah, Mokusuke. I must apologize to you. You must be working twice as hard since Tora ran off.

MOKUSUKE: Well, let me tell you! I am having a time of it because of Tora. From the time I jump up in the morning until I fall into bed at night, I wash and cook the rice, fetch the water, do the shopping, and run errands. It's Mokusuke this and Mokusuke that for everything. I do the work of two servants but only get the wages and food for one. It's unfair!

NIHACHI (*plaintively*): If I could, I would do something for your pains. But what can a noodle vendor do? As it is I have a hard time laying in supplies, and when I run into a spell of bad weather, I can barely earn three coppers.

DONSHICHI: It's all Tora's fault, worrying her father and inconveniencing her master.

KANROKU: That isn't all. She has made her neighbors go searching for her with gong and drum.

[98]

ACT SIX SCENE ONE

MOKUSUKE: Have you located her yet?

NIHACHI: We have searched for three days, but no luck. A man is involved. She must have eloped.

KANROKU (*disgusted*): Who would run off with such a homely girl?

NIHACHI: Mokusuke, you were with her from morning to night. Did you see anything suspicious?

MOKUSUKE (*thinking back*): Nothing unusual, but Izayoi—she used to be my master's mistress—has a father who is the keeper of a potter's field at Muen Temple in Nagoshi. A gravedigger there is enthusiastic about chanting narratives from the puppet theatre. Every time Tora came back from an errand for Madam, she used to talk about his recitation. It may be that he is her lover. Why don't you go there and find out?

NIHACHI: You may have something there. I heard that Izayoi became a nun and went on a pilgrimage to the provinces. Has she returned?

MOKUSUKE: She and her father set out together, but I heard that Izayoi was kidnapped by a gang of ruffians on a back road in Hakone. The old man was crestfallen, but there was nothing for him to do but come back. Then he was hired as a grave keeper.

NIHACHI: I can well sympathize with him. I have lost a daughter, too. I am sure he does not sleep nights. Children are the cause of all our troubles.

Ofuji enters. She is dressed in the clothes of a married woman of some status.

OFUJI: Oh, it's Tora's father. Good evening.

NIHACHI (*apologetically*): I hardly know what excuse to make for Tora. We still have not traced her. I am sorry for the inconvenience she has caused you.

[99]

THE LOVE OF IZAYOI & SEISHIN

OFUJI: Not at all. I do not mind being without help. But I hope for your sake that you find her soon. You must be worried.

NIHACHI (*dejectedly*): Imagine how I feel. This is the third day. My business is at a standstill. My savings are all gone. Now I will have a hard time getting started again. And all because of that unfilial wench.

Ofuji gets her purse from under her collar, takes some coins from it, and wraps them in paper.

OFUJI: You certainly are having a hard time of it. This is only a pittance, but use it to buy supplies.

She gives him the money.

NIHACHI: I thank you for your generosity, but to accept this after all the trouble my daughter has caused you. . . .

OFUJI: It is only a trifling amount. Think nothing of it.

NIHACHI: I do not feel I deserve it.

MOKUSUKE: She has given it to you. Buy yourself some tobacco with it.

NIHACHI: Thank you very much.

DONSHICHI: Well, then, let's go now and make a round over on the other side of the river.

KANROKU: Now that you have some money on you, how about a drink somewhere?

MOKUSUKE: You sly fox! You lost no time, didn't you?

NIHACHI: I will buy both of you some wine as a token of my appreciation.

DONSHICHI: I won't wait to be asked twice.

KANROKU: Let's be on our way.

MOKUSUKE: You tipplers!

[100]

ACT SIX SCENE ONE

OFUJI: Don't be rude!

NIHACHI: Goodbye, Madam.

OFUJI: Let me know when you have located her.

NIHACHI: I will.

The three go out through the gate.

NIHACHI, DONSHICHI, KANROKU: Tora! Where are you?

MOKUSUKE (*upset*): Do they have to yell right in front of our gate?

NIHACHI, DONSHICHI, KANROKU: Missing person! Missing person!

They go down the runway beating the gong and drum.

OFUJI (*annoyed*): Really, where is that troublesome girl? Doesn't she care about her father? By the way, didn't someone come by a while ago?

MOKUSUKE: Yes. Kojibei of the Iseya shop came and asked to borrow five more gold pieces, making it a total of ten.

OFUJI: So that was it.

MOKUSUKE: And four or five people from the theater came to say they were sorry but we would have to wait until opening day for the fifty gold pieces they borrowed under their joint signatures.

OFUJI: Very well. I will tell Master.

MOKUSUKE: Imagine my dismay! They paid nothing on the interest, and they smoked all the tobacco I served them. They acted as though they had a right to it. Even one silver coin's worth of tobacco would not last long with those rascals.

OFUJI: Don't say any more. If you run out of tobacco, I will get you some.

[101]

ACT SIX SCENE ONE

MOKUSUKE (*with feeling*): Thank you. But take my advice and do not loan money to theater people. Nobody is more underhanded.

OFUJI: Don't be so abusive. Take care you do not doze off.

MOKUSUKE: Very well.

Music and song, with drum and flute. Izayoi, with close-cropped hair under a kerchief and in everyday clothes, comes down the runway with Seishin, now the notorious thief, Seikichi. He is dressed in informal clothes with the hem of the outer garment tucked under his sash. He also has a kerchief over his head. They stop on the runway.

SEIKICHI: Hey, Izayoi, where does the man who used to keep you live?

IZAYOI: Not so loud. His house is over there.

SEIKICHI (*musingly*): Hm. A nice house, with an official lantern in front. It must be a money-lending office.

IZAYOI: I never found out where he got it, but he does have a lot of money.

SEIKICHI: That's what I am after.

IZAYOI (*reflectively*): What brought us together again, do you think? I was so sure you were dead that I shaved my hair off. But look at me now: here I am with you again, and my hair is growing in. What do you make of this?

SEIKICHI: We are tied to each other for good or bad. I was banished on account of my visits to you. My hair grew longer, my money ran out, and then I changed my outlook on life completely. It is easy to fall into evil

[102]

ACT SIX SCENE ONE

ways, and before long I had a handle to my name. Example is a good teacher they say, and you were soon doing your share—stealing clothes from bathhouses and doing a little blackmailing.

IZAYOI: I was a coward at first, but at your prodding, I have done my bit. But I do not deserve any credit for it. If my friends should hear of what I am doing, they would say, "Why does she do it?" When I think about that I am embarrassed.

SEIKICHI: It was the same with me. Blackmailers, swindlers, and burglars should have something sinister about them, like a humped nose or large, glittering eyes. But I am short and hardly worth a second glance, with hair just barely grown in at that. It is only with pluck that I pull off my jobs. We have been fated to be together. Let us give each other a helping hand and do our best.

IZAYOI: Well, then, for a starter, let me try working on Hakuren.

SEIKICHI: Do you want me to come, too?

IZAYOI: No, you wait at the gate. I will handle the preliminaries.

SEIKICHI: You sound like a real professional now.

They come to the stage. Ofuji is reading a book by a lamp. Mokusuke is dozing. Izayoi whispers something to Seikichi.

IZAYOI: Is anybody home?

OFUJI: Wake up, Mokusuke. There is someone at the door.

MOKUSUKE: Aye.

He is startled out of his sleep and jumps up.

[103]

THE LOVE OF IZAYOI & SEISHIN

MOKUSUKE: Yes, yes. Here I come.

*He rubs his eyes and opens the gate.
Izayoi bows low.*

MOKUSUKE (*gruffly*): If it is charity you are after, come tomorrow before ten.

IZAYOI (*humbly*): No, I am not here for charity. I want to see Master or Madam.

MOKUSUKE (*peremptorily*): Don't be absurd. I said there will be no more handouts today. Go away, go away.

IZAYOI: Please don't say that and

MOKUSUKE (*cruelly*): You obstinate creature! I said move on!

He shoves Izayoi away from the gate.

IZAYOI (*bristling*): What are you doing, Mokusuke? Don't be so rough with me!

MOKUSUKE (*not impressed*): What? You know my name? That's a fine thing. Do you think I have acquaintances among beggars?

IZAYOI: As though you didn't.

She slips off her kerchief. Mokusuke is astonished.

MOKUSUKE: Oh, it's Izayoi! Madam, Izayoi has come back!

OFUJI: What, Izayoi back?

She gets up.

OFUJI: How glad I am to see you. Come in, come in.

IZAYOI: I humbly beg your pardon, my lady.

Izayoi bows and enters. She settles herself wretchedly at stage right.

OFUJI: Well, tell me what happened. We were very much

[104]

ACT SIX SCENE ONE

concerned. As we had no word from you, my husband and I often talked about you.

IZAYOI: That is very kind of you. I became separated from my father during the journey and fell into the hands of a gang of ruffians. I had a terrible time.

OFUJI: Is that what happened? It's no wonder you have changed so.

MOKUSUKE: Is it any wonder that I did not recognize you at first?

OFUJI: You were pregnant then. Where did you deliver the child?

IZAYOI: I gave birth in the mountains, but as I had little milk, I had to put it out to nurse.

OFUJI: I am relieved to hear that you had your child. Was it a boy or a girl?

IZAYOI: It was a boy.

OFUJI: Ah, how very fortunate! How happy your father will be when he learns about this. I can't wait to send word to him.

IZAYOI: I have not seen my father yet. Does he come here?

MOKUSUKE: He has been here quite frequently.

IZAYOI: Is that so? I have not seen him since we became separated. I was wondering where he was. I did not even know whether he was alive or not.

MOKUSUKE: He is in charge of the potter's field at Muen Temple.

IZAYOI: Now I know where he is. I shall go and see him as soon as I can.

OFUJI: You would do well to do that. I cannot tell you how worried he is.

[105]

THE LOVE OF IZAYOI & SEISHIN

IZAYOI: The more I think about it the more I realize how unfilial I have been.

OFUJI: You still have a long life ahead of you to make up for it.

IZAYOI: Thank you. By the way, is your husband at home?

OFUJI: Yes, he is taking a nap in the back.

IZAYOI (*diffidently*): May I ask a favor of you?

OFUJI: Why the sudden formality, Izayoi? We are as good as sisters. Speak up.

IZAYOI (*hesitantly*): I have no place to stay in Kamakura. If it will not inconvenience you, I would like to stay here. A corner in the kitchen or some such place will do for me.

OFUJI: Why of course. Your father lives in the compound of a temple so they probably would not allow a woman to live there. From this moment, think of this as your home.

IZAYOI: You are very kind.

OFUJI (*in a bantering tone*): But when I think of the past, I get a little worried. Ha, ha, ha.

IZAYOI: I am sure you are teasing me. I have something more to ask: could you put up another person?

OFUJI: Is he your companion?

IZAYOI: Yes.

OFUJI: Where is he?

IZAYOI: At the gate.

OFUJI: Why didn't you bring him in with you? Mokusuke, go and call him in.

MOKUSUKE: Very well.

He goes to the gate.

[106]

ACT SIX SCENE ONE

MOKUSUKE: Are you Izayoi's companion?

SEIKICHI: Yes, I am.

MOKUSUKE (*under his breath*): My, how evil he looks! Come in, come in.

SEIKICHI: Thank you.

He slips off his head covering. When he enters Ofuji is startled by his appearance and is ill at ease.

OFUJI (*uneasily*): Then you are

SEIKICHI: Yes, I am her companion.

OFUJI: Mokusuke, go and call your master.

MOKUSUKE: Aye.

He starts to rise. Hakuren calls out from within.

HAKUREN: No need to come. I will be there in a moment.

Hakuren enters. He wears a black hood and an overcoat. He carries a tobacco tray holding a tobacco container and a pipe.

HAKUREN: Well, Izayoi, I see you are back. It has been a long time, hasn't it?

IZAYOI: It is good to see you again. You are in good spirits as usual.

HAKUREN: Yes.

He sits down.

HAKUREN: You are looking well. Good health is a blessing.

IZAYOI: Thank you. Your wife has just told me that my father has been coming here and causing you no end of trouble.

[107]

THE LOVE OF IZAYOI & SEISHIN

HAKUREN: It is hardly any trouble.

OFUJI: Izayoi has just asked for permission to stay with us. I agreed, but she also has this companion. What shall I do?

MOKUSUKE: The fewer parasites the better. I will have a time of it preparing the meals.

HAKUREN: Hold your tongue and don't meddle!

He turns to Seikichi.

HAKUREN: You are Izayoi's companion?

SEIKICHI: Yes. Then you must be Hakuren. This is the first time we have met. I hope we will be friends.

HAKUREN: Izayoi, is he a relative of yours?

IZAYOI: Yes, he is my . . . husband.

HAKUREN: What, your husband?

OFUJI: Then you are married, Izayoi?

MOKUSUKE: Whoever said that husband and wife get to resemble each other was right. Look they both have shaven heads.

HAKUREN: Anyway, you have settled down. That is good.

SEIKICHI: I know it is an imposition on you, but I hope you will let me stay here with my wife.

HAKUREN: Well, that depends. What is your name?

SEIKICHI: Since your wife and Izayoi are sworn sisters, you and I are as good as brothers. That being the case, I will conceal nothing from you.

He rolls up his left sleeve and reveals a thistle tattooed on his arm.

SEIKICHI (*threateningly*): I am Seikichi, the thief with the tattoo on his arm. Sometimes they call me "the Demon Priest" because I was once a monk.

[108]

ACT SIX SCENE ONE

Everyone except Izayoi gives a start.

HAKUREN: What? Then the priest Seishin who was Izayoi's lover has become the notorious Seikichi?

SEIKICHI: Right.

OFUJI: What do you do?

SEIKICHI: Being an idler by nature, I don't have an honorable profession. I blackmail, swindle, and steal—in plain words, a robber. Practice makes perfect, they say, and Izayoi helps along nicely by lifting things from bathhouses.

His gestures and tone of voice become increasingly sinister.

IZAYOI: Here, now, don't say such things in front of my sister. She'll worry.

SEIKICHI: You're right. Madam, you are indeed fortunate in having such a nice young sister.

MOKUSUKE: Then you are thieves—both of you!

SEIKICHI: Not so loud! I ask you—would you take us for anything else? But supposing someone heard you? I would have a rope around me before I could turn around. If that should happen, I will say that this was my hideout and you are my accomplices.

MOKUSUKE: But to be taken in by a couple of thieves. . . .

HAKUREN: Mokusuke, keep out of this and be quiet!

MOKUSUKE: Aye!

Mokusuke watches Seikichi.

IZAYOI: Sister, may I have a puff?

OFUJI: Yes. I think there is a pipe around here.

She searches

[109]

THE LOVE OF IZAYOI & SEISHIN

IZAYOI: If you don't have one, I will ask Hakuren to lend me his.

HAKUREN: Here you are.

He hands her the tobacco jar and pipe.

IZAYOI (*recollecting*): This is the pipe I used every night. It reminds me of those days.

She draws on it and then holds it out to Hakuren.

IZAYOI (*brazenly*): Would you like a puff?

SEIKICHI (*annoyed*): What do you mean by offering a pipe to another man in front of your husband? Stop that foolishness!

IZAYOI: You keep quiet. I am trying to wheedle seven gold pieces and two silver coins out of him for you.

SEIKICHI (*sneeringly*): Why, that's next to nothing in repayment for the advantages he took of you. I have brooded over how I could personally thank him, and here I am at last. I was foolhardy and rash when I jumped into the river with this woman, but it was her luck to get snagged in your net. You saved her and bought her out from the brothel. You took care of her father. In exchange for all that, you kept her in a house in Hase Lane and enjoyed her every night. In the end you turned her into a nun and threw her out—and all in the name of kindness. You told her to go around praying for my soul. To soothe your conscience as her sworn sister you gave her some money for her journey, but it was consolation money. If that was not abuse, what would you call it? She has a lot to thank you for.

HAKUREN (*taken aback*): I do not think I deserve that. I don't know what Izayoi has told you, but when she told me she was going to become a nun and remain faithful to you, I thought it was admirable in a harlot.

[110]

ACT SIX SCENE ONE

I had paid a high price for her release, but I agreed and let her go. Say what you will, I believe I have acted like a man.

IZAYOI: Indeed! You can find an excuse for anything. Listening to you, anyone would think that was true.

Ofuji is upset by this.

OFUJI: What do you mean by saying "you can find an excuse for anything?" The requests to become a nun and to exchange wine cups as sworn sisters came from you and your father. That is why I agreed. Surely you could not have forgotten that?

MOKUSUKE: That reminds me: I still remember that occasion. Madam gave me one silver coin earlier in the evening for tobacco, and Izayoi gave me another as a parting gift. I have three all told wrapped up in my loincloth. If you think I am lying, I will show you.

Izayoi ignores him and turns to Ofuji.

IZAYOI: Come, sister, I am surprised you can say such things. You got me to shave my hair off with your talk about the afterlife. You told me to go on a pilgrimage to pray for Seishin's soul. You assumed a false face and agreed to become my sister. You told me I could come to you in time of need, and then you threw me out. What was your motive? Jealousy. You have no idea what I went through, thanks to you. I may be a simple woman, but I will not put up with your lies.

OFUJI (*shocked*): What has got into you? What reason did I have to encourage you to become a nun?

IZAYOI: You don't fool me. You made me do it because you were jealous.

OFUJI: I deny that I ever encouraged you to . . .

[111]

THE LOVE OF IZAYOI & SEISHIN

IZAYOI: Yes, you did. It was you who turned me into a nun!

She raises her voice.

SEIKICHI: You're too loud. Lower your voice. Don't be vulgar, Izayoi. You are acting like a blackmailer or a swindler. Keep your voice down.

HAKUREN: Ofuji, you keep out of this, too.

OFUJI: But . . .

HAKUREN: What good is your talking to them?

SEIKICHI (*with mock sweetness*): Have the goodness to forgive her, elder sister. It is only because you are sisters that she feels she can argue about foolish matters. We are going to depend on your kindness indefinitely. But we don't intend to sit around doing nothing. We will answer the door for you.

IZAYOI: You are right. With this cropped head I will feel I got the short end unless you make up to me, Hakuren. You don't look very happy. I suppose I don't appeal to you any more. But when I was your mistress, you did not mind going to bed with me. Wipe away that grim look and give me a smile.

She pulls the kerchief off her shoulder and flaps it against Hakuren's face. Ofuji is ruffled.

OFUJI: Don't be impertinent!

MOKUSUKE: Don't do anything rash.

He restrains Ofuji.

HAKUREN: I have heard you out. I have done favors for you in the past, and I consent to your staying. But I run a money-lending office as you can see. You could not answer the door the way you look now. Come back

[112]

ACT SIX SCENE ONE

after your hair has grown back to normal. Then I will allow you to stay. I will keep my word.

SEIKICHI: Huh! I am running out of patience. In my circle no one thinks about tomorrow. Today may be our last day. Do you think we have time to waste while our hair grows in—and just so that we can stay here?

IZAYOI: Are you afraid to put us up because of our appearance? There is no need to be frightened. We are sworn sisters, but if worse comes to worse, I have the upper hand. One word from me, and you are involved. If you do anything to cross me, I will implicate you.

SEIKICHI: Hey, don't use words like "involved" or "implicate." They are out of date. Nobody uses them these days. I could leave your house, Hakuren, and live like a rich retired man with all the fine things of life. But to be on the run is something I do not relish. This is my true feeling, so set your mind at rest and put us up. But if, as you say, we would make poor doorkeepers, we will disappear for a while, so please lend us some money.

HAKUREN: Very well. If it is your decision to go on a trip, I will give you enough to provide yourselves with sandals. I will make it a gift.

IZAYOI: That is what I call friendship. I hope you will be generous.

HAKUREN: I won't know how much you have in mind unless I ask. How much do you want?

SEIKICHI: We have no idea where we are going. A small sum won't last very long. Make it a nice, round figure: a hundred gold coins.

OFUJI, MOKUSUKE: What? That much?

HAKUREN (*calmly*): Are you sure only a hundred will do?

SEIKICHI (*surprised*): Huh?

[113]

THE LOVE OF IZAYOI & SEISHIN

HAKUREN: That is not much. Ofuji, bring me the chest.
OFUJI: Very well.

*She brings a chest from the closet.
Hakuren releases the lock and takes out
a packet of a hundred gold pieces.*

HAKUREN: There you are. A hundred gold pieces.

SEIKICHI (*incredulous*): I was hardly expecting this.

He picks up the packet.

MOKUSUKE: Oh, a hundred gold pieces for sandals! What expensive sandals! I cannot believe my ears.

*Seikichi and Izayoi are amazed. But
Seikichi's attention is caught by the seal
on the paper wrapper.*

SEIKICHI: What's this seal?

HAKUREN (*alarmed*): Eh?

SEIKICHI (*excitedly*): This is the mark of the seal of the Paradise Temple! Where did this money come from?

HAKUREN: Uh....

SEIKICHI: Your story ought to be an interesting one. With this kind of money around, I return the piddling hundred gold pieces.

He throws the packet to Hakuren.

HAKUREN: How much do you want then?

SEIKICHI (*deliberately*): Three thousand gold pieces.

HAKUREN: What?

SEIKICHI: When I was the sexton at the temple, a masked thief broke in and made away with the three thousand gold pieces that Lord Yoritomo offered the temple in the name of his ancestors. The thief vanished, and

[114]

ACT SIX SCENE ONE

suspicion fell on me. I was arrested and my visits to the brothel were exposed. I was exiled. Do you blame me for thinking of the thief as my enemy? I was beginning to think he led a charmed life, and no wonder. It would have taken a million years to uncover him. He was operating a lending office all this time, an office with a grand entrance and an official lantern. He was a r-tainer to royalty. I will wager that even the local magistrate investigating the robbery does not realize that a gentleman entitled to wear swords is a thief.

Hakuren remains silent.

IZAYOI (*the light dawns*): Well, well! Then it was you who stole the money from the temple. You had me fooled. I used to wonder where the money you spent came from. This is fine. You men are brothers under the skin. We are more intimate than ever. The men will work at night, and sister and I will work as best we can by robbing bathhouses.

Mokusuke has been fuming all the while.

MOKUSUKE: You unfrocked priest! You have given yourself the license to say any number of monstrous things. How dare you accuse my master of taking the money. What proof have you?

SEIKICHI: Be quiet, you fool! Would I have accused him without proof?

MOKUSUKE: Well, where is the evidence?

SEIKICHI: I will tell you: it was my duty to stamp the packets of money. To anyone else the seal is only an ordinary one with faint, undecipherable characters. But I have no trouble making it out. This is my proof. There is no doubt who is the thief. The evidence, this inch-long seal, is conclusive. I will vouch for it.

[115]

THE LOVE OF IZAYOI & SEISHIN

Mokusuke is convinced, but he acts hostile on purpose.

MOKUSUKE: You are making up stories, accusing my master on the basis of some seal or other. If I turn you in, they will clear up the matter for us. I will bind you up and take you in to the authorities!

SEIKICHI (*challengingly*): This is interesting! I dare you. If you hand me over, we all go, strung together like beads on a rosary—this couple and you.

OFUJI (*losing her composure*): Oh! Nobody has ever said such a hateful thing to me before.

MOKUSUKE: You scoundrel! You will threaten us, will you?

He assumes a bellicose attitude. Hakuren restrains him.

HAKUREN: That's enough, Mokusuke. You are no match for him. Anyway, I am not afraid. My conscience is clear in spite of what he has said. Ofuji and Mokusuke, you two go inside and let me settle this.

MOKUSUKE: No, no, I will not go, Master. I am afraid of what might happen to you.

HAKUREN: But even a scoundrel is human and will listen to reason. Do not worry; go.

MOKUSUKE: But....

Hakuren cuts him short.

HAKUREN: Come now, Ofuji, you will only be worried if you remain here listening to our conversation. Go inside with Mokusuke and keep him from intruding.

OFUJI (*concerned*): Will you be safe alone?

HAKUREN: I have a plan. Go inside and stop worrying.

[116]

ACT SIX SCENE ONE

OFUJI: Even so....

HAKUREN (*harshly*): I have asked you to leave. Please go.

OFUJI: Come with me, Mokusuke.

MOKUSUKE: Aye.

He looks at Seikichi.

MOKUSUKE: You brazen hoodlum!

Music. Mokusuke, observing Hakuren and Seikichi, exits with Ofuji. A temple bell tolls. Hakuren gets up, looks cautiously into the interior through the curtained doorway. He then goes from stage right to stage left, and returns to sit down at stage center.

HAKUREN: Seikichi, you have exposed my crime.

SEIKICHI: What?

HAKUREN: You were right. I learned by chance about the three thousand gold pieces that Lord Yoritomo was offering to the temple. I lost no time and stole it that night. I made my living by stealing, and it was easy—like getting grains of millet to stick to a wet hand. I operated from Awa to Kazusa, from Shimōsa to Hitachi. I specialized in temples. I was the thief called Ōdera Shōbei.

He removes his hood and reveals a bushy head of hair—the conventional fright wig of an evil figure in kabuki.

SEIKICHI (*incredulously*): I have heard about Ōdera Shōbei. So you are he!

IZAYOI: I had no idea you were a thief.

HAKUREN: I would not tell this to anyone else, but you can steal all your life and not lay your hands on a

[117]

thousand gold pieces, let alone three thousand, in one lump sum. After I stole it, I thought it was time for me to quit. I divided the loot among my accomplices and went straight. I opened this lending office. I charged no interest on the small sums I loaned to people in distress, and they all speak well of me in this area. I have become so honest that nothing can tempt me. No one suspects, and my sleep has never once been troubled. But you cannot escape the judgment of heaven. If it had been anyone else but you, I would have denied the accusation and stuck to it. But you—the famous Seikichi—exposed me. My back was up against the wall, and I have told you everything. But walls have ears, and I cannot dawdle about here. I will leave this locality and turn thief once more. Having told you this much, I must tell you that of the three thousand gold pieces, I have only three hundred left. I will give you all of it. Spend it and enjoy life to the full. Do the things you have always wanted to do and dine well. The money is sure to slip through your fingers in the end. And give up any idea of turning honest—look at me.

He takes two hundred gold pieces from the chest and places them in front of Seikichi alongside the first packet. Seikichi and Izayoi exchange glances.

HAKUREN: Here, take this. Go. If you still distrust me or think I might steal it from you, then we have come to the end of the road. Either I inform on you or you on me. Either way we must be prepared to spend the rest of our lives in prison.

SEIKICHI (*deflated*): Did you hear that, Izayoi? He has knocked the wind out of me. He is offering the last of his money. Talk about a generous spirit! Compared to his, what mean natures we have. I had come to fleece him. By making an ugly scene I expected only to get

half of what I demanded of him—twenty or thirty gold pieces at the most. But his generous spirit has made me ashamed.

IZAYOI (*miserably*): Think how I feel. I don't know what others would do, but I cannot accept this money now.

SEIKICHI: You are right. Hakuren, you just said that you were going on a journey. If that is the case, money will be your first consideration. I thank you for your generosity, but I must return this to you.

He brings the money up to his forehead in a gesture of gratitude.

HAKUREN: There is no need to feel that way. I will not need so much. I can make my way anywhere by pulling off a job here and there. Take it with you.

SEIKICHI: We can do the same. We will not suffer. Izayoi and I can work together. You are alone. Keep it.

HAKUREN (*proudly*): You forget who you are addressing. I have never taken money back from anybody.

SEIKICHI: Two can play at this game: who do you think I am? I will not accept your money.

HAKUREN: Don't take that attitude.

SEIKICHI (*stubbornly*): I refuse your money.

The two shove the packets back and forth. Izayoi steps in.

IZAYOI: You know the saying "Get a third party to settle a dispute." Let me be the mediator. I don't expect Hakuren to take back his word or money. But let me solve the problem by accepting his gift of a hundred gold pieces and returning the rest.

HAKUREN: I will abide by your decision, Izayoi. I will accept two hundred gold pieces from you. I will not

THE LOVE OF IZAYOI & SEISHIN

hold you under any obligation for your hundred gold pieces.

He takes the two hundred gold pieces and places the packet of a hundred gold pieces in front of Seikichi.

SEIKICHI: I do not want your kindness to come to nothing, so I will take this.

IZAYOI: Now you are satisfied. I am glad I stepped in.

SEIKICHI: But a hundred gold pieces is too much. I feel sorry for you.

HAKUREN: Are you still carrying on? Let me get you a money-belt. You don't have anything to put the money in, do you?

He takes a silk money-belt out of the cupboard.

SEIKICHI: No, I need something, but I won't need that.

IZAYOI: Why don't you put it in the amulet bag you carry in your waistband?

SEIKICHI: That's an idea. I didn't give you enough credit for brains.

He begins to pull out from under his collar an amulet bag of saffron-yellow cotton.

IZAYOI: Listen to him. I teach him a good thing, and he won't even thank me.

HAKUREN: That was a good idea.

SEIKICHI: This thing is stuck.

He yanks it out. The amulets scatter.

IZAYOI: Oh, that's sacrilegious! You've scattered your amulets.

[120]

ACT SIX SCENE ONE

Izayoi gathers them up. Seikichi puts the money inside the bag. Hakuren notices the amulets.

HAKUREN (*curiously*): Tell me, Seikichi, do you belong to the Lotus Sutra sect?

SEIKICHI: Yes, my parents belonged to it.

HAKUREN: No wonder. I see one from the Lotus Sutra Temple at Nakayama to protect you from injury. Another from Komagi for the safe delivery of children. And another from Shibamata with one rice grain in it. They all seem to be from the Shimōsa region, don't they?

SEIKICHI: Yes. I was born in Gyōtoku, the son of a Shiohama fisherman. Like my parents I am a devout believer in the Lotus Sutra sect. It's a strange thing, but my religious side is partial to my native place. That is why I have so many amulets from that area.

HAKUREN: You say you are from Gyōtoku?

SEIKICHI: Yes. I lost both my parents when I was seven. Through the help of an uncle in Kamakura, I entered the priesthood at Paradise Temple to pray for their souls. When I became an acolyte, my ambition was to become a learned priest.

IZAYOI: Now that I think about it, I never learned where you were born, Hakuren.

HAKUREN: I was born in Funabashi, near Gyōtoku, and my father was a fisherman.

SEIKICHI: What a coincidence! If this were a play, we would find some evidence in our amulet bags or pill-boxes and find that we are long-lost brothers.

HAKUREN: I felt a wave of nostalgia come over me when

[121]

THE LOVE OF IZAYOI & SEISHIN

you mentioned Gyōtoku. What was your father's name?

SEIKICHI: Let me show you.

From among the amulets he picks one containing his preserved umbilical cord, and opens it.

SEIKICHI: Here is what it says: "This envelope contains the umbilical cord of Seikichi, the son of Seiji, a fisherman at Gyōtoku in Shimōsa."

Hakuren takes a shot in the dark.

HAKUREN: Did your father happen to have a crescent-shaped scar on his forehead?

SEIKICHI (*surprised*): Yes, he did. He told me he got it in a fight with the post town gang at Ōwada.

HAKUREN: Then you *are* my brother!

SEIKICHI and IZAYOI: What? What did you say?

HAKUREN: It all happened twenty years ago. I am the brother who was kidnapped when you were three. I won't take time now to show you the proof, but I am the Seitarō you must have heard about.

SEIKICHI (*astounded*): Then you are the brother my mother used to mention!

IZAYOI: This is unbelievable!

HAKUREN: To think that I would have run into Izayoi, your wife, and now into you, my own brother!

SEIKICHI: This is like a play!

HAKUREN: What could be more incomprehensible than the ways of this transient world? It all began with my keeping Izayoi. Now after twenty years we meet again. It's a miracle!

[122]

ACT SIX SCENE ONE

IZAYOI: There I was, blissfully unaware that you were my husband's brother, and blackmailing you for a packet of money.

SEIKICHI: And the seal on that packet brought to light the whereabouts of the three thousand gold pieces.

HAKUREN: It took a clever man to expose me, and who should it be but my own brother.

IZAYOI: We are as good as informers to force you to be on the run again.

SEIKICHI: It is too late for regrets. It was only a matter of time before he found himself in this predicament.

HAKUREN (*soberly*): This must be the retribution for our father's having taken so much life as a fisherman. Seikichi, you and I . . .

IZAYOI: . . . will be caught in the Buddha's net of compassion and be saved.

SEIKICHI: But who will die first?

IZAYOI: The survivor will offer water in a bowl . . .

HAKUREN: . . . to whoever is captured and decapitated.

SEIKICHI: Since we have a price on our heads . . .

HAKUREN: . . . our reunion today may be our last.

IZAYOI: This may be our parting in this world.

SEIKICHI: We are in danger now and what our fate will be no one knows.

HAKUREN: In the end, our blood will rust on swords.

SEIKICHI: Hakuren!

HAKUREN: Seikichi!

SEIKICHI, HAKUREN, IZAYOI: A violent death will be ours!

There is a commotion, and Ofuji comes running from the interior.

[123]

THE LOVE OF IZAYOI & SEISHIN

OFUJI (*excitedly*): Listen, Hakuren! Just now Mokusuke said he was going to the baths. I told him they must be closed, but he would not listen and went anyway. He acted strangely.

HAKUREN: I see. That man made some sharp observations despite his stupidity. You say he went out from the back? I wonder if he couldn't have been an agent planted in my house?

OFUJI: What was that?

SEIKICHI: If that is the case, we must be on our guard. He looked exactly like the official who read me the sentence of exile some time ago. You must lose no time making your escape.

HAKUREN: You must go first. You have Izayoi to consider.

IZAYOI: But we cannot leave you like this.

SEIKICHI: If they come now we will fight like devils, but if we are overwhelmed, we will die together.

HAKUREN: Think it over. You are still young. Run away, go!

IZAYOI: Don't think of us. Save my sister.

OFUJI (*suddenly*): I am not staying here another minute.

She prepares to go.

HAKUREN: Ofuji, where are you going?

OFUJI: I heard everything you said. I am going to the magistrate's office to turn you in.

Hakuren seizes her.

HAKUREN: You intend to give us away?

OFUJI: Yes, so that I will not be involved.

She frees herself and runs, but Seikichi

[124]

ACT SIX SCENE ONE

catches her. Hakuren draws his sword.

HAKUREN: You monster!

He slashes at her. Ofuji falls.

SEIKICHI: Oh, you have cut her down.

IZAYOI: My sister!

HAKUREN: I did not want her alive.

Ofuji crawls to him in pain.

OFUJI: I would have been a hindrance to you, Hakuren. Please kill me quickly before they come.

SEIKICHI: What's this? Was it your plan to be killed?

OFUJI (*painfully*): If he took me along, I would only hold him back. If I stayed I would be tortured, so I pretended I was going to inform on him so that I would die by his hands. Now he has only himself to look after. Make your escape and hide. It is not right for me to go before you, but offer a bowl of water at my grave. I will wait in the next world.

HAKUREN: You have my admiration, wife! You have done well to die by my hand. I will thank you fully when we meet again in the next world.

IZAYOI: Your death, dear sister, will be held up to all women as a shining example.

SEIKICHI: You are not one of us, but you have shown a noble resolution.

OFUJI: Oh, the more I suffer the more my attachment to life grows. Kill me quickly.

HAKUREN: I will put you out of your misery in a moment. Hail to Amida Buddha!

He stabs her in the chest. Ofuji clasps her hands and falls dead. Izayoi collapses in

[125]

THE LOVE OF IZAYOI & SEISHIN

tears. The sound of drums is heard at the head of the runway.

HAKUREN: Get ready.

SEIKICHI: Right!

He bolts the gate. Izayoi picks up the money.

IZAYOI: Here is your share.

HAKUREN: It's a nuisance, but I will take it.

He wraps the money in a belt and slips it under the collar of his gown. Terasawa Tōjurō the former servant Mokusuke, enters on the runway. He is dressed in a wide-bottomed split skirt, a short coat split in the back with sleeves tied up with a cord, two swords, and a headband. He carries an iron rod, a symbol of authority. He is followed by six constables dressed in black. He peers inside the gate. Two constables exit at stage right.

HAKUREN: Izayoi, bring that brazier over here.

IZAYOI: All right.

She carries the small hand brazier over to him. Hakuren takes some promissory notes from the chest and puts them in the brazier. There is a burst of flames.

SEIKICHI: What were those papers?

HAKUREN: They were notes on money I loaned. If they were found, they might cause some difficulty.

SEIKICHI: Done like a man!

The two constables dash forward and charge Hakuren and Seikichi.

[126]

ACT SIX SCENE ONE

CONSTABLES: You are under arrest!

Hakuren and Seikichi dodge and parry, then scatter the constables. Hakuren whispers to Seikichi.

SEIKICHI: We are to meet where?

HAKUREN: At the chapel of the Jizō Bodhisattva on Kobukuro Hill.

He says this for Tōjurō's benefit. Then he lowers his voice.

HAKUREN: Slip out quickly from the back.

IZAYOI: Then . . .

The two constables recover and rush the two.

CONSTABLES: You're under arrest!

Hakuren and Seikichi pin them down.

HAKUREN: Go quickly.

SEIKICHI: Right!

He throws the constable and exits with Izayoi. Tōjurō breaks down the entrance and leads his men in to surround Hakuren.

CONSTABLES: Don't move!

HAKUREN: I knew there was something strange about my servant Mokusuke. Now I see. You were an agent, eh?

Tōjurō: Yes. I was ordered to apprehend the thief. You came under suspicion and I gained entry into this house under a ruse. You have been unmasked. Give yourself up like a man.

HAKUREN: Now that it's out in the open, it won't matter how many lives I take. I have only one life to give. On your guard!

[127]

THE LOVE OF IZAYOI & SEISHIN

Tōjūrō: What insolence! Move in and arrest him!

CONSTABLES: Yes, sir! Surrender!

To drum beats they rush Hakuren with raised maces. Hakuren draws his sword and scatters them. There is a fierce duel. The constables retreat into the interior of the house. Tōjūrō throws a net of mail over Hakuren. The two battle. They fall into and hold a pose in a tableau. The stage revolves and the next scene follows without a break.

VI. 2

The scene: the rear of Hakuren's house. The upper half of the rear wall of the house is fitted with a window six feet high, with a lattice of bamboo set in the plaster. Seikichi is seen protecting Izayoi with a drawn sword. She covers behind him. Constables surround them. The drum beats continue until the set comes to rest. The constables rush forward with their maces raised. Seikichi slashes away fiercely. Izayoi attacks the constables with a bamboo rake. There is a commotion and Hakuren enters from stage left with drawn sword. He joins Seikichi and hacks away. The constables run off at stage right and stage left. The three look at each other.

SEIKICHI: Is that you, Hakuren?

HAKUREN: Yes, Seikichi. It's going well.

Both wipe the blood from their swords and sheath them.

[128]

ACT SIX SCENE TWO

HAKUREN: We go our separate ways from here.

SEIKICHI: Right.

Two constables, recovering, dash toward Hakuren and Seikichi, shouting "We've got you!" But in the melee they are defeated. Seikichi and Izayoi go quickly to the runway while Hakuren takes the secondary runway opposite. The window is broken open and Tōjūrō leans out from it.

TōJŪRŌ: They have got away, have they?

SEIKICHI and HAKUREN: A parting shot from us!

They pick up stones and aim them at Tōjūrō, who ducks. The stones strike the constables, who fall. The clappers sound.

SEIKICHI and HAKUREN: Now's the time! Come on!

To accelerated samisen music and the tolling of a temple bell, the two groups go down the runways. Tōjūrō gazes after them from the window. With this tableau, the curtain is drawn.

[129]

ACT SEVEN SCENE ONE

Time: Several days later. Evening.

The scene: the graveyard at Muen Temple. At stage left is a shed for the preparation of corpses. At rear center is the gate leading into the cemetery. At stage right and stage left are black wooden fences. At downstage left is a well. A number of headstones are set about. A willow tree stands in the yard. Nihachi, the noodle vendor, assisted by Donsichi and Kanroku, is dragging Sukizō, the gravedigger, along. Tora is trying to pacify her father. The curtain is drawn to the tapping of the mokugyo drum.

SUKIZŌ: Let me go! What do you want with me?

NIHACHI: What do you think? You are a kidnapper. I am taking you to the magistrate.

DONSHICHI and KANROKU: Move along!

TORA: Wait! I know how angry you are, but please forgive him.

THE LOVE OF IZAYOI & SEISHIN

SUKIZŌ: I plead with you.

NIHACHI: Plead all you like. I cannot forgive you. Where would you find an upstart gravedigger like you who would run off with an honest man's daughter, hide her in the shed where they wash corpses, and ruin her? Off to the magistrate's!

DORAICHI: And it's all on your account that we have been wasting our time looking for Tora.

KANROKU: To even the score, we will lodge a complaint against you and send you to prison.

DONSHICHI: Get a move on!

SUKIZŌ: Wait, wait, both of you.

He begins to chant comically in the puppet theater style.

SUKIZŌ: "You are wrong to think that I enticed her. Tora came to me because she took a fancy to my chanting. You do me an injustice by accusing me of kidnapping her. See—I weep."

DONSHICHI: Don't give us any of your terrible singing. We don't want to listen to it.

KANROKU: What got into Tora to take up with this one?

TORA: Oh, you think me whimsical, do you?

She begins to chant.

TORA: "I grant you there are any number of skilled narrators among professionals and amateurs. But their tunes in general are monotonously alike. Sukizō's chanting has a touch of the Buddhist service. It is unique and harmonizes more with gongs, cymbals, bronze chimes, and drums than with the samisen. Do you blame me for taking to him? Father, must I use

[132]

ACT SEVEN SCENE ONE

force to convince you and push down on your head like this?"

NIHACHI: Even you make fun of me with your silly singing!

SUKIZŌ: "I am out of patience," he says, and burns with rage. His bald head...."

TORA: "... turns hot like a boiling copper kettle."

NIHACHI: Stop that nonsense!

DONSHICHI: On to the magistrate's!

NIHACHI, DONSHICHI, KANROKU: March! March!

They seize Sukizō and start to drag him off. Funeral percussion music offstage. Sanji, with the hem of his gown tucked up, comes up the runway. He is followed by two of Hakuren's underlings who carry a burial tub draped with an unlined garment. Bringing up the rear is Doraichi, a buyer of personal effects of the dead. He carries a bamboo basket. They come to the stage and break into Nihiachi's clamorous group.

SANJI: What's this all about? It may be none of my business, but if this man has done something wrong, pardon him.

BEARER 1: You may have a reason for being angry, but remember where you are.

BEARER 2: Reconcile for the love of Buddha.

NIHACHI, DONSHICHI, KANROKU: No, no, we will not!

SUKIZŌ: "If you will not forgive me, then do your worst. I am prepared to be thrashed."

DORAICHI: Don't carry on so, Sukizō. These people are

[133]

trying to pacify them. Be patient.

SUKIZŌ: Ah, you're Doraichi—the buyer of dead men's belongings.

SANJI: I don't know what the story is, but since I'm in this, I must know.

TORA: You are most kind, but since my father will not listen to reason, it's no use.

Sanji notices Tora.

SANJI: You are Tora, aren't you?

BEARER 1: That's right. She used to be at the chief's.

SANJI: Careful! Don't mention the chief. She worked at the loan office. Now what's behind all this?

DONSHICHI: Listen. The trouble started when Tora fell in love with this gravedigger. She ran away and abandoned her father. That is why we are being so harsh with them.

SANJI: Then I don't blame her father for being so angry.

DORAICHI: But if they love each other, what is the harm?

BEARER 2: We will act as go-betweens.

SANJI, DORAICHI, BEARER 2: So forgive them.

NIHACHI: Well, girls have been known to elope, but who ever heard of a wench . . .

BEARER 1: . . . falling in love with . . .

NIHACHI, BEARER 1: . . . a gravedigger?

DORAICHI (*soothingly*): You are upset and that is natural. But use your judgment, old man. I make the rounds of cemeteries all year to buy up personal effects of the dead. I make more money than secondhand clothes dealers with fine shop fronts. You may sneer at this man here for being a gravedigger, but I guarantee that

[134]

his job is more profitable than most. If I were you I would gladly take him for a son-in-law.

SUKIZŌ: Exactly. At the temple I get three meals a day. As for clothes, I strip them off dead men. And I have more than enough spending money from fees for digging graves and for Buddhist services.

TORA: Not only that: I can eat my fill all year 'round of the buns and rice that people offer at graves. Come to think of it, there is no other business like this one. Do you blame me for falling in love with him?

Tora and Sukizō recite and alternately provide vocal imitation of samisen music.

NIHACHI (*still not convinced*): Oh, when I think of what the neighbors will say: "Has she no feelings for her father? To think that she has married a gravedigger!"

DORAICHI: Come now, gravedigger or cremator, what difference does it make? We live only to satisfy our needs. What good would money be if another cholera epidemic like the one last year should break out? Think that over and give your consent.

NIHACHI: Don't mention that epidemic. It would be terrible if another broke out.

SANJI: Anyway, this is something you can settle by talking it over. As you can see, I have a corpse to dispose of, so I cannot join you. But as mediator I will treat you to a jug of wine. Discuss the matter over a drink.

Sanji gives Nihachi a silver coin.

NIHACHI: This is very kind of you, but to accept this from a total stranger . . .

SANJI: That's all right. We may not have met before, but I know Tora.

[135]

THE LOVE OF IZAYOI & SEISHIN

DONSHICHI: Come along, old man. That man's heart is in the right place. Let's go get a drink.

KANROKU: I'm ready for some wine myself.

SANJI: So am I, but I can't leave the body here. I will send my helpers along with you, so have a good time.

SUKIZÔ: Ah, Sanji, we are indebted to you for stepping into this awkward situation. "I return, I will dig an extra-deep hole for that corpse."

SANJI: That's enough nonsense.

BEARER 2: Join us later, Sanji.

SANJI: You go along, too, ragman.

DORAICHI: No, I think not. With me, food and drink take second place to money. I have to go to the shed to make my purchases.

Sanji turns to Nihachi.

SANJI: Well, old man, you know the saying, "Fall in with your children's ways in old age." Give them your blessing.

NIHACHI: Thank you for everything.

TORA: Goodbye, Sanji.

NIHACHI, DONSHICHI, KANROKU, BEARERS: Off to the wineshop

SUKIZÔ: " . . . we will go."

To drumbeats, Sukizô, who sings a song, Tora, who vocally imitates the samisen, Nihachi, Donshichi, Kanroku, and the bearers exit stage right. With his eyes on Sanji, Doraichi exits stage left. A temple bell tolls. Offstage music is played. Sanji peers around and approaches the burial tub. He speaks in a low voice.

[136]

ACT SEVEN SCENE ONE

SANJI: Chief. I know it's cramped in there, but it's only until evening. With circulars on you everywhere, you can't be seen in a palanquin. That's why I thought of this idea. I got two fellows just back from Kôzuke and new around here to carry you. I had them dress like day laborers, so we didn't attract attention. We will wait until nightfall and then carry you out quietly. We will travel all night as though we were on our way to a crematorium.

Sanji puts an ear up against the tub to listen.

SANJI: What was that? Your brother Seikichi? I haven't heard of his being captured, so he must have escaped. I am sure he got over the mountain all right. But I hope they won't track him down on account of Izayoi. Anyway, I will get you into the shed.

Doraichi enters from behind.

DORAICHI (*ominously*): If you need help, I will give you a hand.

SANJI: That is kind of you. I hate to trouble you, but will you help me?

DORAICHI: Of course.

They lift the tub and carry it into the shed.

DORAICHI: That was an amazingly heavy corpse. He must have been a fine specimen.

SANJI: You're mistaken. It was a woman.

DORAICHI: It didn't feel like a woman. I wonder if that added weight could have been money?

SANJI: What?

He is startled.

DORAICHI: Listen, my name is Doraichi. I buy things from

[137]

THE LOVE OF IZAYOI & SEISHIN

charnel houses. You wouldn't sell that to me would you?

SANJI: What do you mean? What do you want to buy?

DORAICHI: The corpse.

SANJI: What's that?

DORAICHI: A talking corpse is rare. I think I can get a good price for it.

SANJI: What's this you're saying?

DORAICHI: Of course, if you won't sell, I can't buy. But I have taken a fancy to that item. Make me a profit, and I will let you keep it.

SANJI: That's a funny way to ask for a handout. I can be generous to beggars around temples and to workers in charnel houses. They don't have to ask me. If you had said that you felt you needed a drink for helping me, I might have been generous with you, but after what you just said, I wouldn't give you three coppers.

DORAICHI: I would not have said what I did if you had a real corpse in there. I am asking you to seal my lips because the dead man in there talks. I don't need a set of scales to tell me what's in there. I knew in an instant, and I am never wrong. If you doubt me, show me the corpse.

SANJI: Well, I . . .

DORAICHI: You can't, can't you?

SANJI: It isn't that I don't want to, but what is the purpose of that? Here, buy yourself a drink with this.

He takes a silver coin out of his tobacco pouch and holds it out to Doraichi.

DORAICHI: What, one measly silver coin? You can keep it.

He takes it and throws it on the ground.

[138]

ACT SEVEN SCENE TWO

SANJI: Why, you . . . I'll lose my temper in a minute.

DORAICHI: If you do, I'd like to see you do something about it.

SANJI: Don't think I won't.

He uproots a wooden grave marker and brandishes it. Doraichi counters with the beam of his scales. They parry. Then Doraichi dashes down the runway with Sanji in pursuit. The stage revolves. The next scene follows immediately.

VII. 2

The scene: Sagobei's dwelling at the temple. The raised set is eighteen feet wide. The cell is constructed with pillars at the four corners, straw thatch on the roof, and bamboo railings. The interior walls are plastered gray, and there is a curtained doorway at stage rear. At stage left is a Buddhist altar with utensils. In front of the altar are a memorial table of plain wood, an incense burner, and flowers. At stage left the rear of the corpse shed extends out six feet. At stage right is the tombstone of a mass grave. Behind it is a thicket in which grave markers are visible. Sagobei, dressed in a gray robe and hood, applies a light at the altar. Drum beats continue until the set comes to rest.

SAGOBEL (*sadly*): Ah, the older I get the faster a year slips away. It's like a dream. Tomorrow is the first anniversary of Motome's death at the Hundred Piles. We still don't know who killed him. Why did such a filial son

[139]

THE LOVE OF IZAYOI & SEISHIN

meet such an untimely death? This thought tortures me. I have tried to resign myself to his death but cannot. He entered *nirvana* a year ago in the spring. I must make some dumplings to offer to his soul.

He looks out toward stage left.

SAGOBEL: There was some commotion a while ago about Sukizō's having brought a woman into his quarters, but it has quieted down so they must have settled it. Well, I think it's time for prayers.

Sagobei sits down in front of the altar, fingers his rosary, and intones a mass. Seikichi and Izayoi come up the runway. Izayoi is carrying her child.

SEIKICHI: Izayoi, is the boy asleep?

IZAYOI: Yes, he finally dropped off.

Seikichi peers down at the child.

SEIKICHI: Poor fellow. This urchin has been taken care of by other people from the day he was born—and all because of us. Now that he is back with us, he doesn't even have a roof over his head and has to be carried around in the dead of night. It must be hard on him.

IZAYOI: I am not much help either, this being our first child. If he is going to suffer any more I would rather give him away.

SEIKICHI: When they find out who his father is, no one will take him, not even the child farms. And yet it would be too cruel to abandon him.

IZAYOI: Well, then, there's no help for it. We will take care of him as best we can.

SEIKICHI: I did not believe I would be so attached to a child.

[140]

ACT SEVEN SCENE TWO

IZAYOI: They call that paternal love.

SEIKICHI: Anyway, let's get to your father's place.

They come to the stage and peer inside Sagobei's cell.

SEIKICHI: Hello! Is this Sagobei's house?

SAGOBEL: Yes, it is. Who is it?

IZAYOI: Father, it is I.

She pushes the gate open and enters. Sagobei is astonished.

SAGOBEL: Daughter! And Seishin! What a surprise this is!

SEIKICHI: To tell you the truth, I am ashamed to show my face to you.

SAGOBEL: Why should you be? Here, come in, come in.

Seikichi and Izayoi step up into the room. Sagobei offers them tea and tobacco.

SAGOBEL: Well, we have not seen each other in a long while, but it is good to know that you are both well.

SEIKICHI: We are relieved to see that you are well, too.

IZAYOI: I had heard that you lived here, but I could not come and see you whenever I wanted to.

SAGOBEL: Yes, I know all about it. What made both of you do the things you did? I was shocked to learn that the notorious thief called the Demon was.....

He catches himself in time and lowers his voice.

SAGOBEL: . . . you! What possessed you that you would change so completely in mind and appearance? Ah! You have made me the most miserable of men!

SEIKICHI: When you say that, I could crawl into a hole. Try to accept everything as having been determined in

[141]

another life and please forgive us.

SAGOBEL: Oh, don't say that. You have fallen so low on account of my daughter. Now, Izayoi, I have not seen you since you were kidnapped in the mountains. Where did they take you? What happened to you?

IZAYOI: They took me to a secret hiding place called Little Hell Valley. There I met the old woman they call the "Hag from Hell." She runs a sideshow at carnivals and buys midgets, little girls who act like birds, and cripples. Then she sells them in Kamakura. People steer clear of her. She planned to sell me right away to a brothel in a post town on the other side of the mountain. Fortunately I was pregnant and my hair was cropped short so I was worthless to her. She kept me with her hoping my hair would grow long by the time I had my child. Before I knew it I had spent six months there. I became accustomed to what had first filled me with horror. I finally gave birth to this child. As it grew, I was constantly on the lookout for a chance to escape. By some great good fortune I ran into Seikichi on the night of the festival for the mountain god. We made our way back here.

SAGOBEL: So that's what happened. You have suffered much. When they took you from me, I wanted to kill myself, but I remembered the soul I had to pray for, and I came back with a heavy heart, hoping that we would meet again. I wanted to serve the Buddha in some way and became the gravekeeper here. Now just let me see my grandson.

IZAYOI: Here, take a good look at your first grandchild.

She holds the child out. Sagobei cradles it.

SAGOBEL: Oh, what a fine child! Is it a boy or a girl?
IZAYOI: It's a boy.

[142]

SAGOBEL: That's fine. There's no doubt who his parents are. He is the living image of you, Seishin. Look, he's smiling at his grandfather. And we have only just met. What a dear fellow. Come, smile again for me.

SEIKICHI: Even such a worthless creature is lovable to a grandfather.

SAGOBEL: A grandchild is something very special. Oh! Izayoi, I think he's soaked through.

IZAYOI: Oh, that's a nice thing to do to your grandfather!

She takes the infant and changes its diaper.

SEIKICHI: We are anxious to know what happened to you. The moneylender who took Izayoi in for a while—he called himself Hakuren or some such thing—is my brother. He is also a thief. We thought they may have interrogated you about us.

SAGOBEL: They did. The day after you escaped, I was called into Tojūrō's office. He was the manservant in Hakuren's house. He questioned me. I was shocked to hear about you. But as I could tell him nothing, he released me, and I came home.

SEIKICHI: That was fortunate, considering the situation. You will never know how much we worried, wondering about the hardships you must be facing.

SAGOBEL: You are most kind.

IZAYOI: Well, we must be thankful we can get together like this even if it's just for one night.

SEIKICHI: You are right. If we had died when we threw ourselves into the river, you would never have seen your father again.

SAGOBEL: If I had killed myself in Hakone, I would not have seen my dear grandson.

[143]

THE LOVE OF IZAYOI & SEISHIN

SEIKICHI: No matter how difficult things may seem, it is foolish to die.

SAGOBEL: Those words stab me in the heart. The dead are so unfortunate. Izayoi, I have a sad story to tell you: your brother is dead.

IZAYOI (*ag/hast*): What? Motome dead?

SAGOBEL: I have kept this from you until now, but tomorrow will be the first anniversary of his death.

IZAYOI: We only had each other. Why did you not tell me?

SAGOBEL: If he had died of a lingering illness, you would have been at his bedside at the end. But he died such a brutal death, I could not let you see him.

SEIKICHI: He did? Where did this happen?

IZAYOI: And why?

SAGOBEL: Let me tell you what happened to my poor son.

*Samisen music with liturgical gong.
Sagobei wipes away his tears.*

SAGOBEL: Last year, just before you were to be exiled, I thought I would try raising some money for you. But what could a poor man like me do? I went from one place to another. Then I ran into Motome. When I told him of my plan, he said that he would help me. He was my last chance. I waited an eternity for him. When he failed to show up, I put it down to his inability to raise the money. Then my neighbors rushed in to tell me that Motome's corpse had been found floating near the Hundred Piles. I didn't believe it. I flew there. Someone had slashed his throat and had thrown him into the river. I claimed the body and buried it. But whether he died as a result of a grudge or was killed by a thief we still do not know. He was only fourteen, just growing

[144]

ACT SEVEN SCENE TWO

into manhood. Who could have killed him? If I knew who did it, I would kill him with my own bare hands. I am as bitter now as I was a year ago. I cannot forget it even in my sleep.

He chokes and coughs. Izayoi, weeping, rubs his back. Seikichi is anguished.

SEIKICHI: Then it happened at the Hundred Piles, you say.

SAGOBEL: What, did you know about it?

SEIKICHI: I heard people talk about the death of a young boy there. How pitiful!

IZAYOI: Father, you once told me at Hakuren's house that you had to pray for someone's soul, and had shaved your head for that purpose. Was it for Motome? Why did you not tell me then?

SAGOBEL: I did not want to see you grieve.

He remembers something.

SAGOBEL: Here's a good opportunity with Seishin right here. I would like to ask you to do something for me.

He brings forth the plain wooden grave marker and the inkstone box.

SAGOBEL: I prepared the ink with the intention of having the priest inscribe this marker for me. For Motome's sake, won't you write his name on this?

He places the marker in front of Seikichi.

SEIKICHI: If I were to do as you ask, it would do his soul more harm than good.

SAGOBEL: Why would that be?

SEIKICHI: It would have been a different story in the old days when I was a priest. Now people call me "the Demon." If I inscribed it, it would not serve as a

[145]

THE LOVE OF IZAYOI & SEISHIN

memorial or an offering. I would advise you to get the priest to do it.

SAGOBEL: I still don't see why you won't, but there's no help for it then. I will ask one of the priests to do it tomorrow.

He props the board against the wall. Izayoi, with the child in her arms, burns incense at the altar. Seikichi looks toward the runway.

SEIKICHI: Who's that? I think that samurai is headed this way.

IZAYOI: I hope he's not on our trail.

SEIKICHI: We had better take no chances.

SAGOBEL: Hide in the back room for a while.

SEIKICHI: If he should be looking for us . . .

SAGOBEL: Slip out from the back.

SEIKICHI: Shhh!

Seikichi checks to see if they have been overheard. A bell tolls. Seikichi and Izayoi go inside. Sagobei looks toward the runway with a worried expression. Up the runway come Nihachi, carrying a jug of wine; and the samurai Kageyama Shigenojō, wearing a short coat with back vent, a split skirt, and two swords. He carries a lantern.

SHIGENOJŌ: Excuse me, but is this the Muen Temple?

NIHACHI: Yes, it is.

SHIGENOJŌ: I am on my way to pay my respects at the grave of a recently-deceased man. Do you know where the graveyard is?

[146]

ACT SEVEN SCENE TWO

NIHACHI: It is there on the right, but the gravekeeper's house is over there. Inquire there.

SHIGENOJŌ: Thank you.

They come to the stage. Nihachi steps up into the room.

NIHACHI: Sagobei, I have come to apologize for the ruckus we made a while ago. I brought you some wine. Have some.

SAGOBEL: You need not have worried about a thing like that.

NIHACHI: This is only a token. Take it.

SAGOBEL: I am grateful to you.

He takes the jug.

SAGOBEL: Who is that with you?

NIHACHI: This gentleman told me he was looking for a particular grave.

SAGOBEL: Is that so?

Shigenojō enters.

SHIGENOJŌ: I will state my business at once. Was there someone from the Ōe family who was buried here three days ago?

SAGOBEL: Yes.

SHIGENOJŌ: Will you show me his grave?

SAGOBEL: I will lead you to it.

Nihachi has been scrutinizing Shigenojō.

NIHACHI: Forgive me for asking, but are you connected with the Ōe family?

SHIGENOJŌ: Yes, I am.

[147]

THE LOVE OF IZAYOI & SEISHIN

NIHACHI: I may be mistaken, but are you not the son of Kageyama Budayū?

SHIGENOJŌ: Yes. How did you know that?

NIHACHI: By the crest on your lantern and your resemblance to my old master. I was once a servant at your house. I was called Matasuke.

SHIGENOJŌ: Well, well, this is a surprise.

SAGOBĒI: My quarters are not fit to welcome visitors, but please come in.

SHIGENOJŌ: Excuse me.

He steps up into the cell. He notices the memorial tablet, and sits at stage left. Nihachi sits down at stage right.

NIHACHI: I disgraced myself while in your family's service. I have not made any calls to pay my respects since I was discharged. Is your father well?

SHIGENOJŌ: My father died last year in an accident.

NIHACHI: What? I am sorry to hear that. What was the accident?

SHIGENOJŌ: As a former retainer, you are entitled to know. My father chose a samurai without a master named Yaegaki Monza from Yūki in Shimōsa for my sister's husband. For reasons I cannot go into here, he killed my father and fled. Later he decided to return, goaded by his conscience, so that I could avenge my father's death. But he learned that he was also suspected of having stolen the Midorimaru, our lord's heirloom sword, which vanished the night Monza disappeared. Because of the theft he was ordered to disembowel himself. His last words to me on his deathbed were that it was a bitter pill to die disgraced. It is true that he was my enemy. But he also had been my broth-

[148]

ACT SEVEN SCENE TWO

er. That is why I have come to visit his grave at night. I did not wish to be seen.

NIHACHI: What a turn of events this is! What you must have gone through!

SAGOBĒI: I don't mean to interrupt, but the Monza you mentioned must be the son of Mondayū, the master of the Yaegaki school of swordsmanship. I heard that Monza murdered a colleague in an argument and disappeared. You say he committed suicide? That is sad news.

SHIGENOJŌ: You knew Monza?

SAGOBĒI: Yes, my wife was his wetnurse.

SHIGENOJŌ: What a strange karma!

SAGOBĒI: Then the man we buried three days ago was Monza? I had no idea it was he. I have not offered a single invocation to his soul. Hail to Amida Buddha!

Nihachi has been thinking all this while.

NIHACHI: That's it! I remember I was going along the back of the Yaegaki mansion with my noodles. A young samurai about twenty-four or twenty-five came charging through the fence with sword drawn. That must have been Monza. Then what about the heirloom sword? I don't think he had it.

SHIGENOJŌ: It was stolen that very night.

NIHACHI: A young man who ordered some noodles from me that night had an unusual sword. I noticed it. He must have been the thief!

SHIGENOJŌ: He is the man we are looking for.

NIHACHI: Could he have been "the Demon"?

SAGOBĒI: Oh!

NIHACHI: We will be on the lookout for him.

[149]

THE LOVE OF IZAYOI & SEISHIN

SHIGENOJŌ: By the way, who is this Motome Koizuka whose name I see on that tablet?

SAGOBEL: He was my son.

SHIGENOJŌ: Then it must have been he who was given fifty gold pieces by my lord Ōe.

SAGOBEL: You say Lord Ōe gave him fifty gold pieces? Then he did get the amount after all. And it was on account of the money that he lost his life! Ah, the poor boy!

SHIGENOJŌ: With all of these unexpected developments, I have taken up some time. I would like to get to Monza's grave before it gets darker. I will make an appointment for a mass at the temple headquarters, and then I must be on my way.

SAGOBEL: Then I will lead the way.

SHIGENOJŌ: I am sorry to put you to all this trouble, but I would be lost without a guide.

NIHACHI: I will go along, too.

SAGOBEL: Yes, come along.

To music and the tolling of a temple bell, Shigenojō and Nihachi, who are led by Sagobei with a lantern, exit right. Sukizō the grave digger enters from stage right. He is dressed in formal attire, with a stiff winged jacket, and carries a circular of a description of Hakuren pasted on a rectangular board.

SUKIZŌ: Sagobei! Sagobei! The magistrate's office has just sent round this official description! The chief priest told me to tell you that you are to hang it up on the pillar at the gate! He's not in. He must have gone shopping or something. I know he has nothing valuable, but

[150]

ACT SEVEN SCENE TWO

even so it's careless of him to leave the door wide open.

He reads the circular.

SUKIZŌ: Let's see. This is Ōdera, Shōbei the thief who got away with the three thousand gold pieces from Paradise Temple. If he thinks he will not be caught, he is mistaken. Too many people will be on the lookout for him when we put up this circular.

He sings the next line to a jōruri tune.

SUKIZŌ: "The desire to live by stealing what does not belong to you is wicked. Heaven will not condone it."

Sagobei enters from stage right.

SAGOBEL: Ah, Sukizō, have you come on an errand?

SUKIZŌ: Yes. I am to tell you to put this up at the gate. It's a description of Ōdera Shōbei the thief. It's one more task for you, but you are to hang it up in the morning and take it in at night.

SAGOBEL: That's a nuisance. As if I did not have enough to do. I see you have your formal jacket on tonight. Singing again?

SUKIZŌ: I am going to recite the will-o'-the-wisp scene from the play *The Twenty-four Examples of Filial Piety* at my teacher's place across the way. Please come. My teacher asked you to come, too.

SAGOBEL: That's something to look forward to. I will come later.

SUKIZŌ: My friend Towadayū Ichisaku will chant the scene where Okoma, the daughter of the drygoods merchant Shirokiya is led to her execution for a murder plot. I follow him. Listen, I will give you a sample. "Lady Yaegaki sits in front of her lover's portrait. Would she have had it painted if she knew he were alive? She burns some pills in front of it."

[151]

THE LOVE OF IZAYOI & SEISHIN

SAGOBEI: "Pills"? You mean "incense," don't you?

SUKIZŌ: No. The pills cost twenty-four coppers, and the title of the play is *The Twenty-four Examples*. See?

SAGOBEI: Oh, what a terrible pun! Ha, ha, ha!

SUKIZŌ: "Well, I'm off. Come soon."

Chanting, Sukizō exits stage right.

SAGOBEI: Ha, ha, ha! He's tone-deaf, and he loves singing. He is a fool.

His eyes fall on the circular.

SAGOBEI: Ah, this is about Hakuren!

He looks about him.

SAGOBEI: That it would come to this!

Samisen music. Seikichi and Izayoi enter. Sagobei sees them.

SAGOBEI: You must have been uncomfortable inside. We have hardly had time to talk, what with unexpected visitors coming by.

SEIKICHI: Let's go to bed and talk the whole night through. By the way, I overheard that part about Monza. Was he the young master whom Izayoi's mother suckled?

SAGOBEI: Yes. Izayoi had an older brother who died an infant. Because his mother's breasts were full, she served as wetnurse to Monza for five years. I was sorry to hear about his suicide.

SEIKICHI: Karma is mysterious: you never know when or where our paths have crossed in the past. When I was living in Kamakura, my uncle used to tell me that my father had been a retainer to the Yaegaki family and that because he drank too much, he came to grief and became a fisherman. The more I think about it the more appalling my deeds become.

[152]

ACT SEVEN SCENE TWO

IZAYOI: Then your father also served the Yaegaki? Then your father and my mother were colleagues. Isn't it amazing that their children should have married?

SAGOBEI: The god of marriage at Izumo is as good as a playwright to have woven such a complicated plot.

SEIKICHI: You are right. Speaking of plays, circulars often figure in them.

He picks up the circular and reads it.

SEIKICHI: My brother won't be free much longer.

IZAYOI: Everything I hear or see tonight depresses me. Even in my father's house I am nervous and can't sit still.

SEIKICHI: That's because you haven't had a good night's sleep for so long, what with our running and hiding.

SAGOBEI: Tonight you may sleep here without a care in the world. I will go across the way to the singing teacher's for a recital. I have a jug of wine that you may have. I will be back by midnight. Enjoy yourselves until then. If you want to go to bed, the quilts are over there.

He points to the closet.

IZAYOI: Thank you.

SAGOBEI: Well, then, I will be on my way.

IZAYOI: Enjoy yourself.

Sagobei starts for the gate, stops, and turns back.

SAGOBEI: Lock the door.

SEIKICHI: All right.

SAGOBEI: Now, to hear Sukizō chant.

Music. Sagobei exist at stage right. A bell tolls. Seikichi secures the latch on the

[153]

THE LOVE OF IZAYOI & SEISHIN

bamboo lattice door. Izayoi puts the baby to sleep, pours the wine into a porcelain bottle, and puts it in an earthenware teapot over the fireplace to warm.

SEIKICHI (*gloomily*): The weather doesn't look too good. I hope it won't rain tomorrow.

He steps up onto the platform. He sees Motome's memorial tablet.

SEIKICHI: So he was your brother. How was I to know? Hail to Amida Buddha!

Izayoi puts the wine bottle, cups, and bowls of food on a tray.

IZAYOI: Come, Seikichi, the wine is warm. Have a cup. *She holds out a wine cup. Seikichi picks up a bowl.*

SEIKICHI: The cup is too small. I'll have some in this bowl. IZAYOI: Here you are. Take your time.

Seikichi gulps it down. He chokes and splutters.

IZAYOI: I told you so. You can have all the wine you want, so don't gulp it down.

Seikichi holds out the bowl.

SEIKICHI: Fill it up again.

IZAYOI: Do you think you should drink so much?

SEIKICHI: I'm in low spirits tonight. I need the wine to cheer me up.

He gulps the wine down.

SEIKICHI: Here, why don't you have some, too?

IZAYOI: I am going to have an attack of cramps. I've felt it

[154]

ACT SEVEN SCENE TWO

coming ever since I heard about my brother's death. I won't have any tonight.

SEIKICHI: I'll have just one more.

He drinks another bowlful. The baby begins to cry.

IZAYOI: Hush, hush. You have had a bad dream. Magic charm! Come and get rid of the dream!

SEIKICHI: Something must have told him about me.

IZAYOI: What did you say?

SEIKICHI: Nothing. I was wondering out loud if he had been bitten by something.

IZAYOI: He has fallen asleep again. Why don't we lie down for a while?

SEIKICHI: If you want to go to bed, you go ahead. I cannot sleep.

IZAYOI: Why not?

Seikichi rises and gets the memorial tablet.

SEIKICHI: Because of what I have done to your brother.

IZAYOI: What are you saying?

Seikichi pauses.

SEIKICHI: I killed him.

IZAYOI: Oh!

She collapses. The child begins to cry.

Seikichi looks around cautiously to see whether they are being overheard. Izayoi recovers and then tends to the baby.

SEIKICHI: When we jumped into the river last year, I could not drown. I floated and drifted to the shore. Then I heard the sounds of merrymaking in a boat. In that instant my mind involuntarily made a complete turn-

[155]

THE LOVE OF IZAYOI & SEISHIN

about. Having been born a man, I thought, why not indulge myself and live for pleasure? Robbery was the answer. I killed your brother for his money. How was I to know that it was intended for me? No, I cannot sleep. We could not help it when we were ignorant of the facts. Now you know who I am: your sworn enemy.

IZAYOI: You, my brother's murderer? And fate has brought us together.

She is horror-stricken. The baby cries.

IZAYOI: Oh, don't cry, don't cry.

She rocks the child.

SEIKICHI: Can I make you understand the agony I felt when your father said that his anger has only grown more intense over the year? Then came worse news: because I stole the sword from the Oe family, the son of your mother's master and my father's had to die. Now my own brother is being hunted down because I unwittingly exposed him when I went to blackmail him.

IZAYOI: But we didn't know any of this. It is too late for us to do anything about it now. Don't lose courage now. If you do, you won't live to see our son grow up.

SEIKICHI: I don't expect to live much longer. Those who hate me for my deeds must curse me awake or asleep. Your father said so himself. The gravedigger said that heaven will punish a thief. That was like an omen to me. So kill me and avenge your brother. Then let your father take his vengeance by offering my head to Monza and your brother.

He places his short sword in front of Izayoi.

IZAYOI (*desperately*): I know what is in your heart, but suppose you should die now—who would have one kind word to say about you? People will only laugh at you.

[156]

ACT SEVEN SCENE TWO

They will say, "If he had that much concern about honor, why did he turn thief in the first place?" People call you "the Demon" now. Then be a demon to the end, and leave off talking about death. It's cowardly.

She rocks the child in her arms.

IZAYOI: Hush, hush.

SEIKICHI: What you say doesn't change anything: I am still a fugitive from justice. Supposing I decided to live: what additional sorrows will I cause your father to suffer? What more remorse will I have to feel? The only way I can atone is by dying. Turn yourself into a demon, Izayoi, and kill your brother's murderer.

He shores the sword in Izayoi's direction. Izayoi pushes it aside.

IZAYOI: Don't be ridiculous! You say we are enemies, but when we became husband and wife it was for two or three worlds in the future. How can you expect me to kill you?

The baby cries.

IZAYOI: Hush, don't cry. See how stubborn your father is. He says things to make me suffer. Well, Seikichi, if you insist on a killing, I must die first. I slept with your brother. True, I was ignorant of his relationship to you; but even so I must die, and I have known this for a long time. Only the thought of this child has prevented me from killing myself before this. He would have to be brought up by others. If you have any pity for me, please don't say such things to me.

Seikichi expresses pity for the child and Izayoi.

SEIKICHI: I know how you feel. My love for the child makes me realize only too well your father's anger. My son has made me appreciate what it means to be a

[157]

rather die here in my father's house. This is much less unfilial. Save yourself and bring this child up yourself. That is all I ask.

SEIKICHI: Izayoi, nothing you have said convinces me that I should not be the first to die. For my son I have nothing but pity. But I do not expect to live much longer for the crimes that I have committed. I will follow you.

IZAYOI: If that is how you feel, then kill our child, too.

SEIKICHI: I've had that in mind. We will take him along with us. He will only be another burden on his grandfather.

IZAYOI: Looking back, I can only wish that we had drowned.

SEIKICHI: We would have been spared these sorrows. It was only because we were saved that . . .

IZAYOI: . . . we took a crooked course and committed countless evil deeds.

SEIKICHI: There was no escape for us: our day of reckoning was coming. And here it is: a year to the day for the law of cause and effect to catch up with us.

IZAYOI: My brother died an untimely death.

SEIKICHI: And today, on the eve of the anniversary of his death . . .

IZAYOI: . . . we also die, as it was fixed in another life.

SEIKICHI, IZAYOI: How brief our lives will have been!

The infant cries.

SEIKICHI: Don't cry! Don't cry!

He pats the child.

SEIKICHI: I must leave an explanation of our deaths. Put up with the pain just a while longer and wait for me.

[159]

father. But there is no reason for me to live. If I do not die by your hands I will by mine. Raise our child and think of him as me.

IZAYOI: Do you think I would survive you? I will go first. Raise this child for me.

She places the infant in front of Seikichi and picks up the sword. Seikichi stops her.

SEIKICHI: Stop this folly! How can I bring him up?

IZAYOI: It is only right for a boy to be with his father.

The child cries loudly.

SEIKICHI: Ah, poor boy! Don't cry.

Izayoi unsheathes the sword.

IZAYOI: Now . . . quickly.

SEIKICHI: Stop! Look out! Let go!

IZAYOI: No, no! Let me die!

Izayoi attempts to stab herself. Seikichi and Izayoi struggle for possession of the sword. Seikichi accidentally slashes Izayoi deeply in the shoulder. She falls. Seikichi is aghast.

SEIKICHI: Oh! My hand swerved!

IZAYOI (*gasping with pain*): I'm glad! I will go first.

SEIKICHI: You have acted rashly.

Music, with sound effects of chirping insects.

IZAYOI: Listen: if you died and I were left behind, think of the miserable fate that would be mine. I know it is unfilial of me to cause my father sorrow not once but twice. But can I save my father from suffering? Even if I lived, they would only arrest me in the end. I would

[158]

THE LOVE OF IZAYOI & SEISHIN

He gazes at the child.

SEIKICHI: Ah, cry your heart out! Death will soon come to still your voice.

IZAYOI: Oh, the pain! Give me some water.

SEIKICHI: But that would be fatal. Well, death is not far away. Here is a cup of water to mark our parting in this world.

He dips water from a bucket.

SEIKICHI: Drink this, and cut your ties from this world with no regrets.

IZAYOI: I am happy to do so.

She clutches the ladle, drinks deeply, and falls into a coma. Seikichi brings his lips to her ear.

SEIKICHI: Izayoi, listen: I will soon follow you.

Izayoi revives.

IZAYOI: Where is the boy?

SEIKICHI: Here he is. Here he is.

He brings the child up to her.

IZAYOI: Ah, I can no longer see him clearly.

She gropes for the child's face, grimaces with pain, and then falls dead. Seikichi crumples, and patting the child, weeps. A voice is heard from the singing teacher's house across the street.

ANNOUNCER: Your attention please! We begin the recital with the scene from the play *The Love of Okoma* in which Okoma is led to the execution grounds at Suzugamori.

The narrator onstage begins.

[160]

ACT SEVEN SCENE TWO

NARRATOR: "The execution grounds at Suzugamori have long been notorious: those who go there meet death. The grounds are enclosed by a fence of fresh bamboo. Unsheathed lances stand in glittering array. The horrible and fearful tortures of hell await the criminal in this world."

Seikichi picks up the child and puts him to sleep. He conceals Izayoi's body behind a two-leaf screen.

SEIKICHI: What ill luck! The chanting next door is about a girl being led to her death. I thought I would suffer a criminal's death, like her. But I will die on mats in a house, not led around in public on horseback and then executed. But what about this child? He forfeits his life as though he were an accomplice. My son, it was your misfortune to have had criminals for your parents. Now you must die by the sword. Before I do, though, I must leave a note for Sagobei.

He picks up the circular.

SEIKICHI: I will rip the circular off and use the board to write on. It won't take long.

NARRATOR: "Okoma's father is blinded, as all fathers are, with love for his child, and cannot resign himself."

Seikichi brings up the inkstone box, picks up the writing brush, looks at the child with sorrow, tears off the paper, and begins to write.

NARRATOR: "Blinded with tears, he comes to the execution grounds, as though in a trance, as though in a dream."

Seikichi finishes his note. He takes a rosary from the lintel and puts it around his neck. He places the placard where the

[161]

rosary had been, signifying that it is to be placed over his grave.

SEIKICHI: When Sagobei reads this, I know he will forgive me. And Izayoi will ask forgiveness of Monza for me.

The child whimpers. Seikichi picks it up.

SEIKICHI: I have never heard my son cry like this before. Surely his guardian deity must have spoken to him.

NARRATOR: "Today is the day of separation between parents and child in this world. They have come for their last farewell."

Seikichi presses his cheek against the child's and caresses his head.

SEIKICHI: I have no desire to kill you. You have all your life ahead of you. But what will people say of you after our deaths when grandfather will look after you? "Look, that is the son of the thief 'Demon' Seikichi. What is in store for him?" That is why I am going to kill you. You are not a year old. But you are my son. Be brave. Go to the Western Paradise of Amida bravely, not crying like a coward.

NARRATOR: "They saw the bamboo enclosure and the terrifying unsheathed lances. 'Is our child to be killed by those?' they cried, and their hearts were crushed."

Seikichi picks up the child and is about to stab him, but his courage fails. He throws the sword aside and looks at the child.

SEIKICHI: He laughs. He doesn't know how close he is to death. He melts my heart.

NARRATOR: "Only an implacable karma can explain the fate of our child: we petted her and denied her nothing. Yet here she is—a criminal about to be executed."

SEIKICHI: Those lines fill me with remorse for the many

lives I have taken, beginning with Motome's. Now I can appreciate the sorrow of the parents of my victims. I have no wish to kill my son, my own flesh and blood.

NARRATOR: "The father babbles, 'Condemn me to hell, Amida, but show some mercy to my daughter and save her.'"

Seikichi fondles the infant.

SEIKICHI: I will leave you in Sagobei's care.

NARRATOR: " 'This way, this way,' Okoma's father says to his wife, and leads her away from the crowds to comfort her."

Seikichi puts the sleeping child down. He breathes a sigh of relief.

SEIKICHI: I yearn to die, but I am drawn to my son and he detains me from my journey to the shades.

NARRATOR: "It was due to thwarted desire that the wretched and irreconcilable business of love and obligations arose. It is for love that Okoma is now so cruelly bound by cords. A river of tears flows from her downcast eyes. Sadder than a lamb on its way to the slaughter-house, she has resigned herself to her fate. Weak and weeping, she is led through the streets."

Seikichi places an incense burner and a vase on a table of plain wood. He sheds the clothing on the upper half of his body, wraps all but the point of the short sword with a towel, and prepares to disembowel himself.

SEIKICHI: If things can only be undone. But that is impossible. Having been a thief. . .

NARRATOR: ". . . the end is pitiful. The tortures of the

Mountain of Swords in hell await the criminal in this world."

Seikichi thrusts the blade into his belly and crumples over the sword.

NARRATOR: "To be gartted, to be subjected to miserable shame—all this has been determined by karma."

Seikichi is in agony.

NARRATOR: "Farewell to my love to whom I am pledged for two worlds. Farewell to my parents: our ties are only for this world."

Seikichi drags himself to the screen and looks at the concealed Izayoi.

NARRATOR: "She peers through the openings in the fence but cannot make out her parents. Her eyes are swollen with weeping."

Seikichi looks at Izayoi and the child in anguish.

NARRATOR: "At that very moment, the parents push aside the crowds and cling to the bamboo fence."

Shōbei Ōdera, alias Hakuren, breaks through the wainscoting of the shed and enters. Sagobei enters from stage right. They go up to Seikichi.

HAKUREN (*horror-stricken*): You have been too hasty, Seikichi.

SAGOBEL: What is the reason for this . . .

HAKUREN, SAGOBEL: . . . suicide?

SEIKICHI: You will find it in that confession.

HAKUREN: What? A confession?

SAGOBEL: That must be it.

[164]

He points to the placard. Hakuren reads it.

HAKUREN: "The confession of Seikichi, known as 'the Demon,' a drifter and thief from Gyōtoku in Shimōsa. When I was exiled for having broken the priest's vow of chastity by frequenting the pleasure quarters, I strong-armed my brother-in-law, taking him for a stranger, and accidentally killed him while robbing him of fifty gold pieces which were intended for me. Later, I broke into the Ōe mansion and made away with the heirloom sword the Midorimaru, and caused suspicion to fall upon my father's former master Yaegaki Monza. Still later, I was guilty of exposing my brother's identity and crimes. In Izayoi's eyes, I am her enemy. Death is the only atonement. My crimes have been without number and all have had tragic consequences. Now is the time for me to show repentance and to atone to society with my life. I am a commoner, but I will die like a samurai by drawing a sword across my belly from the left ribs to the right. Bury me where I deserve to be buried: in the potter's field." You have acted out of repentance then?

SAGOBEL: There was no need for that.

HAKUREN: You were too hasty.

NARRATOR: "The father and mother cling to each other and weep. Okoma lifts up her face."

SEIKICHI: Father, I am to blame for the deaths of Motome and Izayoi. I know how you feel, but I hope you will forgive me now.

NARRATOR: "At these words Okoma's mother is overcome, and falls into a paroxysm of grief."

Sagobei peers over the screen.

SAGOBEL (*wailing*): Oh, what miserable figures you are!

[165]

THE LOVE OF IZAYOI & SEISHIN

Will your death bring Motome back to life? Why did you not decide to conceal the fact that you had killed him and, with repentance in your heart, pray for the repose of his soul? The two persons I looked to as my support in my old age precede me in death. I am sore at heart when I think that I will survive you, to be pointed at behind my back as a man born under an unlucky star. Oh, why did you have to do this?

SEIKICHI: Ah, you have every reason to grieve, father, but...

NARRATOR: "...you need not weep. Think of me as having been doomed in some previous existence to be your enemy in this world. This will lighten my burden in the land of the dead."

SEIKICHI: I have only one request to make: bring this orphan up and teach him to be an honest man.

Seikichi draws out the amulet bag.

SEIKICHI: Of the hundred gold pieces in here, fifty belong to Motome; the rest is to be used for the boy.

Sagobei picks up the child.

SAGOBEL: Don't worry about my grandson. I will raise him to be a good man.

HAKUREN: I had not counted on being at my brother's deathbed. But this is the end of my luck. I am wanted in every corner of the country. Every day might be my last. If you have something more to tell me, Seikichi, do so now.

SEIKICHI: Only one thing more: after you have decapitated me, place my head at that altar.

HAKUREN: I will follow your orders.

SEIKICHI: And father, give this sword to Kageyama so that he may clear Monza.

[166]

ACT SEVEN SCENE TWO

SAGOBEL: I will see to that.

SEIKICHI: Now my conscience is clear. Let me see my son once more.

NARRATOR: "Recalling the innocence of their child, the parents weep and wail. Their cries are as loud as the waves that crash on the shore."

Sagobei brings the infant to Seikichi, who caresses it. Hakuren and Sagobei burst into tears. There is a commotion and Sanji enters from stage right. He is dressed as an outcast. A cord ties up his sleeves and the hem of his garment is tucked under his sash. The two bearers, also dressed like pariahs, accompany him. They carry bamboo spears.

SANJI: We've been looking for you, chief.

HAKUREN: Sanji! And my men! What has happened?

SANJI: The scavenger got very insistent about you, so we had to run him through.

BEARER 1: Bad news travels swiftly they say.

BEARER 2: Rumors about you are spreading. We made these bamboo spears...

SANJI, BEARERS: ...to make a stand here. That's why we came.

HAKUREN: Then I cannot mark time here.

SEIKICHI: Sever my head quickly.

HAKUREN: I will.

SEIKICHI: Father, the sword to Kageyama...

SAGOBEL: Rest assured.

Sagobei wipes the blood from the sword

[167]

THE LOVE OF IZAYOI & SEISHIN

and slips it into the scabbard. Shigenojo comes running in from stage left.

SHIGENOJO: I will save you the trouble of coming to me. I will claim the sword.

SAGOBEL: Here you are, sir.

He holds it out. Shigenojo takes it and inspects it.

SHIGENOJO: Ah! It is the Midorimaru. Now Monza's honor is restored. I am much obliged to you.

HAKUREN: Now to the task of putting an end to my brother's suffering.

He takes his sword and stands behind Seikichi.

SANJI: Then this is . . .

SEIKICHI: . . . our parting in this world.

SAGOBEL: May your life in the afterworld be peaceful.

Sagobei brings out a gong. He strikes it. Shigenojo sits on a rock at stage left. The two bearers stand at stage right. Sanji stands at stage rear with a bucket of water. When Hakuren draws his sword, Sanji pours water over it. Enduring great pain, Seikichi straightens up.

HAKUREN: They say that a man capable of great evil is also capable of much good.

SHIGENOJO: This death would do credit to a samurai.

SEIKICHI: Place my head . . .

HAKUREN: . . . on the altar. It will be done.

SEIKICHI: Then I am ready.

Hakuren swings up his sword. Seikichi

[168]

ACT SEVEN SCENE THREE

picks up the small table by its legs and lowers his head on it. On this cue, the clappers sound.

SEIKICHI: Offer my head . . .

Sagobei beats the gong and intones a prayer. A temple bell tolls. The curtain is drawn. There is a shout from Hakuren as he brings his sword down. This is followed by drumbeats, and the next scene is played without pause.

VII. 3

The scene: the front gate of Muen Temple. At stage left is a large crossbarred gate at the base of which is a smaller stoop-gate. Near it is the watchman's shack. At stage right and left are sections of a mud wall. At the side of the shack is a large barrel to catch rainwater. Two palanquins with their side blinds pulled down are at stage right and left. Two carriers stand by. The curtain is drawn to the beating of drums.

CARRIER 1: Say mate, what happened to the other two, Hachi and Gon?

CARRIER 2: I don't know. They went off to get some straw sandals, but they must be drinking somewhere.

CARRIER 1: I'll bet.

He turns toward the palanquin.

CARRIER 1: Sirs, I am going to get our partners. I must ask you to wait awhile. Come on mate, let's go look for them.

CARRIER 2: They cause us more trouble . . .

[169]

THE LOVE OF IZAYOI & SEISHIN

They exit at left. Hakuren's two bearers come through the stoopgate with the burial tub.

BEARER 1: Well, let's get up into the hills through Koshigoe.

BEARER 2: It's pitch black tonight. Just right for our purposes.

BEARER 1: Let's get to Nagoshi as quickly as possible.

BEARER 2: Right!

Four constables, dressed in black, enter from stage right and left.

CONSTABLE 1: Halt!

He rushes the bearers brandishing an iron mace.

BEARER 1: What's the meaning of this?

CONSTABLE 2: We know the man in the tub is Ōdera Shōbei.

BEARER 2: If that's the case. . . .

He counterattacks with his pole. They duel. The temple drum continues. The bearers flee down the runway. The constables lift up the tub and exit in pursuit. A bell tolls. Hakuren appears through the stoopgate. He wears a gray robe, a monk's black habit, a hat of woven bamboo. He carries a lantern inscribed with the characters "Muen Temple." He looks down the runway.

HAKUREN: There I was, hidden in a tub and pretending to be a corpse. But the bottom fell out of that ruse. I would have been caught, trussed up, and thrown into

[170]

ACT SEVEN SCENE THREE

prison if Sanji had not offered to take my place. I have escaped being buried. Now, to escape.

A bell tolls. The blinds of the palanquins are flung up revealing two constables in each. They are dressed in black. They peer out at Hakuren. Hakuren sees them. He starts and then blows out the light. The constables close in on him.

CONSTABLES: You're under arrest!

Hakuren throws the hat off and duels with them. They take hold of Hakuren and pin him down; but he throws them off. The monk's habit falls away. He goes down the runway. From the curtained entrance at the head of the runway four constables come to challenge Hakuren. He retreats slowly back to the stage. The second group of constables joins the first. Hakuren stands them off. The men climb up the watchman's shack and leap down from the roof; they hide behind the palanquins. The constables eventually flee down the runway.

HAKUREN: I am at the end of my rope. I will die here like a man.

He prepares to rip open his belly. Sagobei dashes out from the gate with the child in his arms. He stops Hakuren.

SAGOBEI: Wait, Hakuren!

HAKUREN: Why did you stop me, Sagobei?

SAGOBEI: For the sake of this lad. I am old. My days are numbered. When I die, who can he look to? Only you.

[171]

THE LOVE OF IZAYOI & SEISHIN

HAKUREN: You are right. This boy is my only kin.

SAGOBEL: Then live, do not die, and see to this child.

HAKUREN: But this place is surrounded. What can I do?

SAGOBEL: Go to the rear of the temple. . . .

HAKUREN: . . . to the charnel house, then cut across the brothel. . . .

SAGOBEL: That's right! Quickly!

HAKUREN: Now to make my getaway.

Four constables enter and surround him.

CONSTABLES: You're under arrest!

HAKUREN: Hah! I'll make you dance first!

Hakuren stands at stage center; Sagobei stands at stage right; the constables hold a pose at stage left. The curtain is drawn on this tableau.