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The purpose of this thesis is to study the script, produce the play, and evaluate the production of Fay and Michael Kanin's Rashomon. The play is based on the short stories written by the late modern Japanese short story master Ryunosuke Akutagawa.

The first part includes the following: (1) historical and stylistic analyses of the play, (2) character descriptions and analyses, (3) a discussion of the function and mood of the set, and (4) justification for the director's choice of the script for production.

The second part includes the director's prompt book of the production, performed on July 8, 9, and 10, 1971, in Taylor Theatre at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. Types of notations included are: (1) movement, composition and picturization, (2) rhythm and tempo notes, and stage business, and (3) sound and light notes. Floor plan and production photographs are included.

The third part is the director's critical evaluation of the production. Discussed in this part are: (1) goals and achievements of interpretation, style, and mood, (2) actor-director relationships during the rehearsal period, and (3) audience reaction to the production.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF  
RASHOMON

by

Kwang Hwa Su

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## DEDICATION

The writer wishes to dedicate this thesis to his parents;  
to professor Josephine Huang Hung.

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PART I

PART I

## PART I

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF RASHOMON

The stage play Rashomon by Fay and Michael Kanin actually is an adaptation of the screen play written by the famous Japanese film producer and director Akira Kurosawa. The production of this screen play, which was also directed by Kurosawa, turned out as the international award-winning Japanese film in 1951.

Kurosawa based his scenario for the screen play Rashomon on the short stories written by the late Japanese writer Ryunosuke Akutagawa. Kurosawa employed the basic story: a husband and wife encounter a bandit on a journey through a forest; there occurs the rape of the wife and the death of the husband. But instead of accepting Akutagawa's first-person method of rendering this action four times through the respective accounts of the wife, the husband (through a medium), the bandit, and a woodcutter, Kurosawa significantly alters his literary source by adding the character of the commoner, eventually an inspiration from Akutagawa's "Rashomon," who listens to and comments upon the four versions of the central action as reported to him by the priest and the woodcutter. Hence the commoner's responses are an added layer of reality presented to the viewer. In directly

presenting conflicting testimonies, Akutagawa dramatically confronts the reader with the problem of attempting to determine truth empirically; Kurosawa's incorporation of the wigmaker makes for great artifice, enabling him to go beyond recreating Akutagawa's study in philosophical skepticism. The wigmaker's point of view gives not only structural order to the play but also subtly thickens its already complex, refracted reality. The ending of the play though invented by Kurosawa seems more likely to be used as a justification of Akutagawa's conception of the many facets of human nature. It reminds us that the human heart, as hollow and filthy as it might be, can be uplifted by the smallest touch, the most fleeting gesture, of compassion.

#### Ryunosuke Akutagawa and His Short Stories

Ryunosuke Akutagawa (1892-1927), occupies a pre-eminent position in the literary history of Japan following World War I, and is one of the most distinctive writers in modern Japan. A poet, critic and essayist, but, above all, author of numerous short stories, he produced many enduring works which have amused, baffled and disturbed his readers. He was a master story teller who was fascinated throughout his life by strange and mysterious tales, and he endowed his art with a freshness, color and originality by frequently drawing on these tales and giving them new and complex meaning. He was a brilliant stylist, with a poet's keen sensitivity for the

texture of the language as well as a passion for clarity and brevity, and he cultivated a dazzling variety of approaches. He was also a reflective thinker who was deeply absorbed in the complex problems of human nature, and he wrote of them with penetrating insight.

Akutagawa experienced disillusionment early in life. This was not only crucial in molding his whole personality, but it was also central to the evolution of his art. He chose to portray himself as a frail and sickly youth with an oversized head and bulging eyes; pale and gaunt; timid but stubborn; keen of mind, but fragile of nerves; insecure and terribly alone. His recollection of his early youth and his early letters reveal not only an overly sensitive youth whose future attitude toward life was already crystallized during his formative years. He perceived life in terms of the disparity between reality and appearance, and he observed and simultaneously dissected whatever experiences he encountered.

Literature loomed very large in Akutagawa's life. He was an avid reader of Japanese, Chinese and Western literature from his early youth, and his own accounts strongly suggest that literature represented something of a separate world in which he could take refuge and share its experiences without being personally wounded. It was from books that he claimed he learned about love, hate and vanity, and discovered the human comedies that were daily enacted before his very eyes, and even learned about himself. His attachment to literature

was strengthened during his university life when he was closely associated with aspiring writers, poets and dramatists; and when he finally turned to creative writing as his chosen profession, it became a formidable compulsion with him.

In his fiction Akutagawa achieved a remarkable diversity in setting, form and idiom. A preponderant number of stories are cast in the historical past of Japan—in the medieval period, the early period of Christian conversion in the 16th century, the Tokugawa and in the early Meiji periods. But some of his works are also given a contemporary setting. Toward the end of his life, he also wrote a number of semi-autobiographical works, and even experimented with what he termed a novel without a plot. In form, he usually employed descriptive narrative, preferring to play the role of an observer, and, at times, even a compiler. But, he also cultivated the dramatic monologue, the narrative in the first person singular, forms of letters and memoranda; and he varied his idiom according to the subject matter, from the archaic to the colloquial and from the epistolary to the vernacular.

The historical past played a particularly significant role in Akutagawa's fiction. It provided him with many of the legends and tales which he wove into his works with startling effect. He had a predilection for strange and unusual tales. Their imaginative and often bizarre settings appealed to his poetic imagination. Furthermore, he found in these old tales a human comedy which had relevance to all ages.

Akutagawa was, above all, a writer with a theme. For him the many unusual episodes served as particularly effective vehicles to dramatically, yet artistically, develop his themes. One might also suggest that because of his own disillusionment with life, he found it easier to write of life by casting his stories in the historical past, thus establishing an esthetic distance between himself and his subject.

Akutagawa's themes evolved around his conception of the nature of man, and his unpredictable behavior. Man's behavior, he felt, was determined not by any objective standards of good or evil, right or wrong, but by his personal choices, his own desires, likes and dislikes, and even often these were not always clearly defined in man's mind, but often contained conflicting and contradictory elements. He can rationalize his actions; he can, and usually does, interpret facts, read into situations, in accordance with his wishes, although he may not realize it. He may draw conclusions that may seem infallible, but yet, in the final analysis, turn out to be tragically wrong. Or he may commit acts that would seem incomprehensible in the light of an objective set of conditions. Akutagawa probed into these and many other facets of human nature and, adopting the method of irony, pointed to the self-deceptions, the stupidities, calousness and even inhumanities which man practiced on himself and toward others as well.

To Akutagawa, life is like fireworks. In his life time, he had always been trying to catch the momentary beauty of it.

The human mind is in the dark with not a light to shine upon. It burns a fire of world cares to go and fade in but a span.<sup>1</sup>

It is this beauty of a falling star that he valued the most. And he, like a falling star himself, committed suicide in 1927 at the age of thirty-five. In his suicide notes, Akutagawa said that he seemed to be gradually losing the animal something known as the power to live, and continued:

I am living in a world of morbid nerves, clear and cold as ice . . . I do not know when I will summon up the resolve to kill myself. But nature is for me more beautiful than it has ever been before. I have no doubt that it will laugh at the contradiction, for here I love nature even when I am contemplating suicide. But nature is beautiful because it comes to my eyes in their last extremity.<sup>2</sup>

In short, Akutagawa is the intellectual type of writer and hence a master of the story with a theme. He lays great store on the mental factors that inhere in his works, besides endowing them with a satiric sharpness and a humorous flavor--an extremely clever hand at confusing the motives of men with paradoxical thrusts.

The Historical Background of "Rashomon"

The historical background of Rashomon is set in the

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<sup>1</sup>Ryunosuke Akutagawa, "Kesa and Morito, "Rashomon and Other Stories (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation 1970), p. 96.

<sup>2</sup>Yasunari Kawabata, Japan, The Beautiful and Myself (Tokyo: Kodansha International Ltd., 1969), p. 63.

decayed Koyto in the 12th century Japan. As far as the play is concerned, certain mores of the times are of influence. Koyto, in the 12th century, was the dying capital of the late Heian era. As Leonard stated:

Like a dark cloud blotting out the sun, a turbulent era of bloodshed and almost incessant warfare followed the golden Heian Age. Within the Imperial Court gentle artistry and refinement were a continuing ideal, but all around brutal violence flourished and at times shattered the serenity of the court itself.<sup>3</sup>

The provinces then were in turmoil, with private armies battling each other and defying the forces of the central government. The highways were plagued by bandits; the sea swarmed with pirates. Often disorder penetrated into the capital of peace and tranquility itself. Robbers broke into noblemen's homes or set the wooden buildings on fire. Much of the city was burned to the ground and never rebuilt. Large sections lapsed into wilderness infested with outlaws and robbers.

The civil war that swept Japan during the 12th century brought in a new age of strength and steel. A fierce new breed of armed nobleman, the Samurai, began to emerge. Artisans turned their talents to the production of the superb swords and armor, which combined beauty with a deadly practicality.

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<sup>3</sup>Jonathan Norton Leonard, Early Japan (New York: Time-Life Books, 1968), p. 55.

It took more than just a sword and a metal suit, however, to arm a samurai. Part of his equipment was moral and psychological--an austere, unwritten code of personal courage and loyalty. The code, known as bushido, or "The way of the warrior," demanded an almost religious commitment to military life, in which physical hardship was the order of the day, and a heroic death in battle the most honorable goal.

The important fact to remember is that honour and loyalty required the samurai man or woman to be ready at any moment to perform self-destruction by the sword. They were not supposed to be afraid of death; and, thus, they overcome death. To die for a right cause is a privilege and a fulfillment for them. All down through that society, in varying forms, the same spirit of honor and loyalty had its manifestations. As the samurai to his liege-lord, so the wife to her husband, the apprentice to the patron, and the clerk to the merchant. Everywhere there was trust, because everywhere there existed the same sense of obligation of servant to master. Each industry and occupation had its religion of loyalty and honor--requiring, on the one side, absolute obedience and sacrifice and on the other, kindness and aid.

The social organization of the times, in brief outline, was the general ordination of those noble and military classes by whom the nation was ruled with great severity. The bulk of the common people were divided into three classes:

farmers, artisans, and merchants. Buddhist priests, though forming a class apart, ranked with the samurai, not with the common folk. This whole class organization was calculated to maintain the superior position of the warrior class, and the careful regulation of the behavior proper to each class and of relations between classes was an integral part of this feudal organization. Every man's pleasures were more or less regulated by his place in society, and to pass from a lower into a higher rank was no easy matter. Extraordinary men were sometimes able to do this by attracting the favour of the great. But many perils attended upon such distinction; and the wisest policy for the common people was to remain satisfied with one's position, and try to find as much happiness in life as the law allowed.

Accepting as partly true the statement that woman everywhere is what man has made her, we might say that this statement is more true of the Japanese woman in that society than of any other. The Japanese woman, especially the noble ones, since her childhood was prepared and perfected by the old-time education for that society in which the charm of her moral being,--her delicacy, her supreme unselfishness, her childlike piety and trust, her exquisite tactful perception of all ways and means to make happiness about her,--was appreciated and valued. And as far as physical charm is concerned, she was meant to possess physical elegance: her every motion, gesture, or expression being in the most easy,

the most graceful, the modest way possible. Besides these there were charm of both face and form: the charm of childhood--childhood with its every feature yet softly and vaguely outlines,--childhood before the limbs have fully lengthened,--slight and dainty, with admirable little hands and feet. The women shaved off their eyebrows and painted much heavier ones high on their foreheads. They also blackened their teeth; white teeth were considered glaring and hideous. They let their glossy black hair grow as long as possible: a girl was considered unusually lovely if her hair was abundant and longer than she was tall. In a word, the old-fashioned education of her sex was directed to the development of the every quality essentially feminine, and to the suppression of the opposite quality.

In religious matters, the grossest superstitions marched side by side with lofty Buddhist philosophy. Belief in demons, goblins and other noxious supernatural spirits was common, and there were incantations, charms and spells aplenty to keep them at bay. The spirits of the dead, according to ancient Japanese thinking, continued to exist in the world: they mingled somehow with the viewless forces of nature, and acted through them. Everything happened by the agency of these spirits--evil or good. Those who had been wicked in life remained wicked after death; those who had been good in life became gods after death; but all were to be propitiated.

With these ancient beliefs Buddhism attempted to interfere only by expanding and expounding them,--by interpreting them in a totally new light. Modifications were affected, but no suppressions: one might even say that Buddhism accepted the whole body of the old beliefs. It was true, the new teaching declared, that the dead continued to exist invisibly; and it was not wrong to suppose that they became divinities, since all of them were destined, sooner or later, to enter upon the way to Buddhahood--the divine condition.

Buddhism, however, did more than tolerate the old rites. It cultivated and elaborated them. But perhaps the greatest values of Buddhism to the society then was educational. The Shinto priests were not teachers. They were mostly aristocrats, religious representatives of the clans and the idea of educating the common people could not even have occurred to them. Buddhism, on the other hand, offered the boon of education to all, not merely a religious education, but an education in the arts and the learning of China. The Buddhist temples eventually became common schools, or had schools attached to them. By degrees the education of almost the whole nation came under Buddhist control; and the moral effect was of the best. For the military class indeed there was another and special system of education; but Samurai scholars sought to perfect their knowledge under Buddhist teachers of renown; and the imperial household itself employed Buddhist instructors. For the common people

everywhere the Buddhist priest was the school master; and by virtue of his occupation as teacher, not less than by reason of his religious office, he ranked with the samurai.

"Rashomon," The Play

Rashomon is a story about a double crime; rape and homicide (or possibly suicide). The time is the 12th century A. D. It is told in retrospect, and in successive layers, by the three participants, the dead warrior (through a mediumistic priestess), his raped wife, and a notorious bandit perhaps responsible for the warrior's death as well as for his wife's violation, and by a woodcutter who alleges himself to have witnessed, accidentally, the whole episode. The quality of the play's narrative is so fine that an astonishingly unified effect emerges from the conflicting stories furnished by the three principals and (following the inquest) by the lone witness. The bandit and the woman have separately fled the scene of the crimes, where the woodcutter claims, at first, to have arrived only in time to find the warrior's corpse. The woman claims to have killed her husband in an irresponsible fit of horror after the rape took place; her husband claims to have committed hari-kiri out of grief and humiliation; and the bandit claims to have killed the warrior in honorable combat; and the woodcutter confirms the bandit's story while picturing the conduct of all participants quite differently from the ways they respectively describe it. As no trial of either of

the living participants is shown, and as no consequent action reveals anything conclusive as to the crime, the decision as to the actual truth of the whole affair falls to the spectator's option. Since technically the woodcutter is the only "objective" witness, he might seem the most reliable of the four testifiers. But his integrity is not beyond question; the version by the warrior's ghost has contradicted his version in an important detail--one inadvertently confirmed by the woodcutter's implicit admission (in an incident following the inquest) that he stole a dagger at the scene of the crime. The ghost has testified that he felt "someone" draw from his breast the dagger with which he alleges he committed hari-kiri.

Logically, if one's aim is to establish in theory the "legal" truth of the affair, the only obvious method is to correlate all the admissible facts of the action with the four persons involved in order to determine their relative integrity as individuals--a procedure complicated not merely by the given criminal status of one participant but by the fact that all but the woodcutter have willingly assumed guilt. A further difficulty, in general, is that nothing of the background of any character is given beyond what can be assumed from his visible behavior and his social status; for example, there is only the merest hint of something unusual in the journey of the warrior and his lady in the eyes of the other. So, unless one be prejudiced for one sex or another, one

social class or another, it seems almost impossible to make a really plausible choice of the truth-teller (if any). Is one to conclude, in this dilemma, that Rashomon amounts to no more than a trick piece, a conventional mystery melodrama, left hanging? The director's answer is "no." There are several things about the play which argue it as a unique and conscious art, the opposite of a puzzle; or at least, no more of a puzzle than those modern paintings of which a spectator may be heard to say: "But what is it? What is it supposed to mean?"

The director's opinion is that the last thing required of the elucidation of Rashomon's mystery is something corresponding to a jury's verdict. Such a judgment, aesthetically speaking, is as useless for appreciating the substance of this play as for appreciating the art of Picasso. In Rashomon, there is no strategic effort to conceal instead of reveal. The basic issue, in art, must always be what the creator desires to reveal. Of such a painting as Picasso's Girl Before Mirror, it may be said that it contains an "enigma." But this enigma is merely one specific aspect of the whole mystery of being, a particular insight into human consciousness in terms of the individual, and so has that complex poetry of which all profound art partakes. So with the enigma of Rashomon. Rashomon is a "mystery story" to the extent that existence itself is a mystery as conceived in the deepest psychological and aesthetic senses.

The action of Rashomon literally begins at the Rashomon gate, a great ruin where the woodcutter and the priest, who has previously seen the woman and been present at the inquest, are sheltered during a rainstorm. According to the several versions, these two gradually reveal everything that has taken place. What is important is the inherent value of the way the technique of the flashback has been variously used. The separate stories are equally straightforward, equally forceful; no matter which version is being related, every participant behaves with the same conviction. As a result one is compelled to believe each story implicitly as it unfolds, and oddly none seems to cancel out the other. Therefore it would be only from the policeman's viewpoint of wanting to pin guilt on one of the persons that, ultimately, any obligation would be felt to sift the conflicting evidence and render a formal verdict. Rashomon as a work of art naturally seems to call for a response having nothing to do with a courtroom.

Of an event less significant, less stark and rudimentary in terms of human behavior, the technical question of "the truth" might prove insistent enough to embarrass one's judgment. The inevitable impulse, at first sight, is to speculate on which of those who claim guilt is really guilty of the warrior's death. But whatever conclusion is tentatively reached, what eventually slips back into the spectator's mind and possesses it, is the traumatic violence of the basic

pattern: that violence which is the heart of the enigma. The civilization of this medieval period is turned topsy-turvy by the bandit's strategy, in which he tricks the man, ties him up, and forces him to witness his wife's violation. It is only from this point forward that the stories differ: the woman's reaction to the bandit's assault, the husband's behavior after being freed from his bonds--everything is disputed by one version or another. But is not the heart of the confusion within the event itself? Is this happening not one so frightfully destructive of human poise and ethical custom that it breeds its own ambiguity, and that this ambiguity infects the minds of these people?

All participants are suffering from the shock: the warrior's agonized ghost, his hysterical wife, the bandit, when caught, seized with mad bravado. Unexpectedly--for the paths of the couple and the bandit have crossed purely by accident--three lives have been irretrievably altered after being reduced to the most primitive condition conceivable. Two men have risked death for the possession of a woman. Basically, it is a pattern that was born with the beginnings of mankind. Such an event, in civilized times of high culture, would of itself contain something opaque and even incredible. The illicit impulse springing up in the bandit's breast as the lady's long veil blows aside, is so violent that its consequences attack the sense of reality at its moral root. Regardless of what literally took place in the

forest's depths that mild summer day, each participant is justified in reconstructing it in a manner to redeem the prestige of the moral sense, which, consciously or not, is a civilized person's most precious possession. It should be emphasized that it is the Japanese people who are involved, and that to them honor is of peculiarly paramount value; even the bandit is quick to seize the opportunity to maintain--truthfully or not--that he behaved like a man of caste rather than an outlaw; he has testified that following the rape (to which, he says, the woman yielded willingly) he untied the husband and bested him in fair swordplay.

Hence, a psychologically unilateral, indisputable perspective exists in which the tragic episode can be viewed by the spectator: a perspective contrary to that in which one of the persons appears technically guilty of the warrior's death. This perspective is simply the catastrophe as single movement which temporarily annihilated the moral reality on which civilized human consciousness is based. The "legal" or objective reality of the affair (what might be called its statistics) is exactly what cannot be recovered because the physical episode, as human action, has been self-annihilating. Of course, then, it might be claimed that the woodcutter, not being involved except as a spectator, is a disinterested witness of the episode, and accordingly his story that the three participants in the tragedy really played a grim farce, in which two cowards were

the heros and a shrew the heroine, is the correct version. But the opening scene of the framing story makes it plain that the woodcutter's mind is in a state similar to that of the participants themselves; indeed, he is evidently dismayed by the fact that all their testimony belies what he proceeds to reveal as "the truth." However, as the shocked witness of such a debacle of the social order--in any case a victory of evil over good--this peasant may have withheld his testimony out of superstitious timidity. If, in fact, he saw all that took place, then the added confusion that the participants contradict each other may raise bewilderment in his simple mind--may even tempt him to exploit his subconscious envy and resentment against his betters by imagining their behavior as disgraceful and ludicrous. It seems within Rashomon's subtle pattern to suggest that even a simple, disinterested witness should be drawn psychologically into the chaos of this incident; after all, there is no proof that he did not invent his own account in competition with the others'. This assumption would lend credit to the conclusion that the real function of each witness's story is to salvage his own sense of reality, however close his version to the event as it took place. Perhaps it would be accurate to add that the facts themselves have no true legal status since each witness is forced to draw on his subjective imagination rather than on his capacity to observe. In this case, each is in

the position of the proto-artist, who uses reality only as a crude norm; the sense of invention enters into reality. On the other hand, there is the literal truth of the denouement, the climax of the framing story, in which the woodcutter adopts a foundling baby who has been left in the gate's interior. The relation of this incident to the story proper strikes the director as the most problematical element of all, if only because the play would have remained intact without it.

Morally, of course, this incident functions as a re-statement of human values in the sense of good. Its purpose is to convince the priest, who has been thinking of giving up his vocation, that human beings are capable of unselfish impulses as well as self-serving lies. But the specifically religious view that humanity has hopelessly degraded itself in the forest episode (the view represented by the priest) is more external than essential to the whole conception. The priest thinks in terms equivalent, logically, to the law's terms: truth or falsehood. Since some lying is self-evident, the sin of concealment is added to crime; i.e., concealment of the truth, not of the crime, for all profess crime. Ironically enough, confession has become a sin. What seems significant to the whole is the collective nature of the liars: they literally outnumber the truth-teller (whichever he may be). The "sin" involved has gone beyond individual performance and exists objectively as would a natural cataclysm such as a volcanic eruption. That each participant assumes

guilt, including the dead man, reveals the comprehensiveness and irresistibility of the disorder. A lie, then, actually becomes the symbol of the operation by which these people mutually regain their moral identities. Since these identities have been destroyed as though by an objective force beyond anyone's control, any means seems fair to regain them. However, these characters cannot separate themselves from the sense of tragedy, they prefer to be tragedy's heroes. But why should the three tragedies seem as one?

The total psychological space in the play, because of its complexity, is rendered in literal time as is music. A similar psychological space is rendered simultaneously in Picasso's Girl Before Mirror by the device of the mirror as well as by the double image of profile-and-full face on the girl. Her moonlike face has a symbolic integration as different "phases" of the same person; that is, her full face denotes her personality as it confronts the world and her profile her personality as it confronts itself: the mirror image in which the full-face character of her aspect is diminished. The mirror-image in Picasso's work thus asserts a psychological datum parallel with the dominantly subjective testimony of each witness in Rashomon's tragedy.

Against the awareness of his material fate, the individual erects many defenses: art, pleasure, ethics, God, religion, immortality-ideas, sensations, and acts whose continuity in him are preserved by constant cultivation, periodic

renewal, unconscious "testimony." These constitute his moral identity in the social order. In them resides the essence of his being, the law of his contentment, and his rational ability to function from hour to hour. In the lives of the persons of Rashomon, where this objective order prevailed, utter chaos was suddenly injected. Each person was shaken out of himself, became part of that blind flux which joins the intuition of the suspense-before-birth with that of the suspense-before-death and whose name is terror. This was largely because of the tragedy's physical violence, which temporarily vanquished human reason. If we look at the terror of war as depicted in Picasso's Guernica, we observe a social cataclysm of which the forest episode in Rashomon is a microcosm. Curiously enough, Guernica happens to be divided vertically into four main sections, or panels, which Picasso has subtly unified by overlapping certain formal elements. Thus, while the great massacre is of course highly simplified here in visual terms, it is moreover synthesized by means of four stages or views. As wrenched by violence as are the individual forms, they congregate, so to speak, to make order out of confusion. Though Picasso was not recomposing from memory, he might have been; in any case, the drive of art is toward formal order and individuals in Rashomon, as protoartists, have this same drive. As gradually accumulated, the sum total of Rashomon constitutes a time mural whose unity lies in the fact that, however different are the imaginations of the four witnesses,

whatever harsh vibrations their mutual contradictions set up, the general design remains and dominates the work's final aspect of great beauty and great truth.

#### The Style, The Characters, and The Setting

The whole of Rashomon is told in a framework of flashbacks. To the director, it is a play of a story book atmosphere rather than a play of a highly stylized Kabuki flavor. And since Rashomon is a play dealing with the mystery of human nature, the director feels that the Japanese background of the play should be staged to such an extent as to reveal the universal theme of the play rather than to try to stage a period play. The goal of the production, then, is to attempt to translate motifs of Japanese life and art into the texture of western theatre by not insisting on the strict Japanese taste. The acting style, then, must be realistic, but the production style will be theatrical.

The characterizations in Rashomon are simple and vibrant. On one hand we have a haughty samurai, a questionable wife, and an animal-like bandit, and on the other hand we have an austere priest, a cautious woodcutter, and a cynical wig-maker. They reveal both the philosophical theme of the play and the psychological aspect of human nature. As a savagely cynical rogue, the wigmaker is similar to the bandit. Both of them possess a kind of barbaric nature. Tajomaru, with a keen mind, could be either a monster or a fake-bandit, yet

he is conceited, slothful all the same. Raped by Tajomaru, the wife could be either a lady of sensitivity or a hussy. As a victim of circumstances, the devious, peasant-hearted woodcutter cannot help but be unfaithful. Questioned by the priest and the wigmaker, he finally has to confess that he did steal the silver-handled sword from the dead samurai. And according to the woodcutter's story, the icy husband could be pictured either as a traditional samurai or a timid soul. Modest priest is austere in what he believes. He dispenses forgiveness and is shocked by the notion that men are depraved. Outwardly he is a recognizable Christian but an inconceivable Buddhist. The characterizations of the mother, the deputy and the medium are typical types. However, the mother and the deputy are touched with a sense of vanity.

Rashomon by inference, not only discussed and presented the eternal challenge that faces mankind in the quest for truth, but it also depicted the equally permanent threat to peace represented by falsehoods, selfishness and greed that leads to devastation, horror and--as their ultimate expression--to war. Indeed, what Akutagawa intended as the subtle shadow play of appearance and reality becomes, in the wigmaker's summing up, little more than an optical illusion: "Truth is a firefly, now you see it; now you don't."

Rashomon has a haunting mood throughout. It is a play

about the mystery of human nature. The line and color of the setting should be earthy in essence. The set and lighting are devised to help to hold the audience attention and to tie the tantalizingly simple frame work of the play. The set should be so placed that the actors can get on and off from one locale to another unobstrusively when the lights are out, and can move easily from the court into the forest as the action demands. And the arrangement of scenery and lighting will allow the audience's attention to be directed from one scene to another with the greatest possible fluidity. In general, the set should suggest an Oriental flavor without falling into a pagoda-ridden cliché. The costumes should have an authentic Japanese style. The selectiveness and suitability of the costumes are required to fit the times and characters of the play. The use of music and incidental sounds are to punctuate the silent moments of the play and to cast a spell.

In conclusion, Rashomon is a play with a compelling central situation. It is essentially theatrical. Also it is a profound play of a non-national, timeless theme. The director believes that its production will be a challenge and an awarding experience to himself and all the other participants. Furthermore, Rashomon is a provocative play with a peculiarly Oriental flavor. And hopefully its production on the stage of Taylor Theatre will be an attraction to theatre-goers.

1950

1951

1952

1953

PART II

1954

1955

1956

1957

1958

1959

1960

1961

## PART II

## PROMPT BOOK

ACT ONE

HOUSE LIGHT DIM TO HALF. MUSIC. "PROLOGUE".

SCENE: THE ACTION TAKES PLACE IN KYOTO, JAPAN, AT AN EDGE OF THE RASHOMON GATE, AT A POLICE COURT, AND IN A NEARBY FOREST. A SINGLE SETTING PROVIDES THE THREE SEPARATE LOCALES. AT LEFT STAGE, THERE IS THE SUGGESTION OF THE RASHOMON GATE. AT DOWN-RIGHT STAGE, THERE IS THE SUGGESTION OF AN ANCIENT POLICE COURT. COMMANDING MOST OF THE STAGE IS THE FOREST OUTSIDE OF THE CITY. TWO SEPARATE PARTS OF THIS FOREST ARE ON A REVOLVABLE PLATFORM. (SEE FIGURE 1)

TIME: ABOUT THE TWELFTH CENTURY A. D.

AT RISE: RASHOMON GATE. THE INTRODUCTORY MUSIC DISSOLVES INTO THE SOUND OF THE RAIN, AS THE LIGHTS COME UP ON A SECTION OF THIS CRUMBLING AND DESERTED EDIFICE WHICH ONCE SERVED IMPOSINGLY AS THE ENTRANCE TO KYOTO. NOW IT HUDDLES WET AND GREY AND FORLORN IN THE DOWNPOUR, AND SEEMS MORE THAN EVER REMOVED FROM THE MAINSTREAM OF THE LIVING CITY.

IN A DRY SPOT UNDER THE SAGGING ROOF, A BUDDHIST PRIEST SITS ON THE STONE FLOOR NEAR A MEAGRE BONFIRE. BESIDE HIM IS AN IMPROVISED PACK CONTAINING ALL HIS WORLDLY BELONGINGS. HE SEEMS MORE TIRED THAN HIS THIRTY-ODD YEARS WARRANT--A STUDY IN DEFEAT--AS HE HOLDS HIS KIMONO ABOUT HIM AND STARES OFF INTO SPACE. AFTER A FEW MOMENTS, A WOODCUTTER COMES RUNNING THROUGH THE RAIN TOWARD THE GATE. (FROM THE EXTREME LEFT STAGE.) HE HURRIES UP THE STEPS OF THE GATE, LOOKING AROUND, THEN STOPS SHORT AS HE SEES THE PRIEST. HE BOWS RESPECTFULLY.

WOODCUTTER

(OUT OF BREATH.) Forgive me, holy one--but--I've run all the way from the town. (HE INDICATES THE DIRECTION FROM WHICH HE CAME.) I didn't believe them at the marketplace

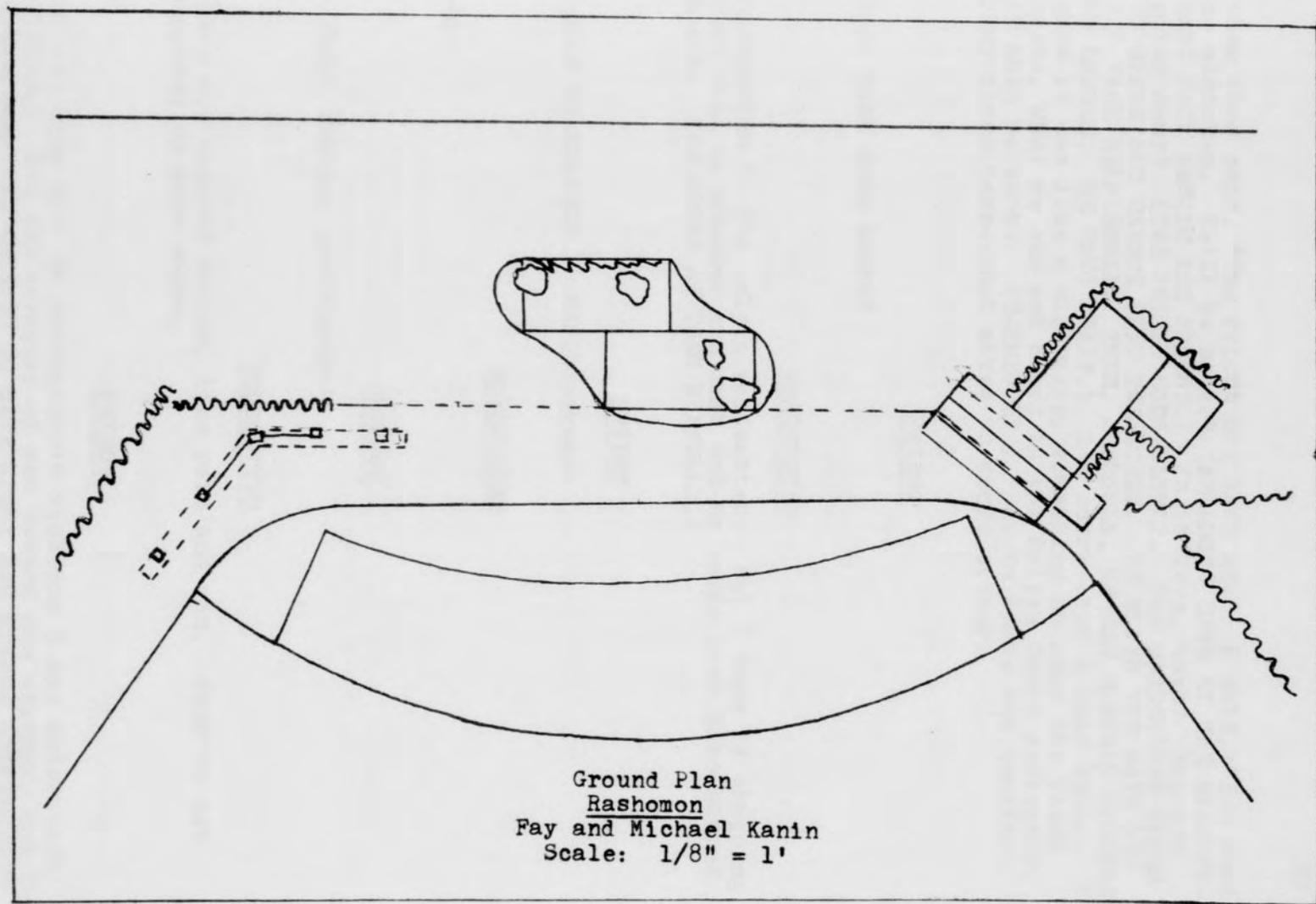


FIGURE I

when they said, "The Priest has left us." I said, "You must be mistaken. He'll be back." (HE LOOKS DOWN AT THE SIGNIFICANT PACK BESIDE THE PRIEST.) Is it true, then? You are going away? (THE PRIEST NODS SLOWLY. THE WOODCUTTER TRIES TO SPEAK BUT CANNOT FIND THE WORDS. HE WIPES THE RAIN OFF HIS FACE HELPLESSLY. THEN, SUDDENLY, HE CAN CONTAIN HIMSELF NO LONGER. HE BOWS AGAIN.) I'm sorry--but I must speak. I know it was like a nightmare, something to make the flesh creep, what we saw and heard in the Police Court yesterday. It made no sense. (EARNESTLY.) But to leave the Temple--your place here--that makes no sense either.

PRIEST

What does make sense?

WOODCUTTER

(SHRUGGING.) I'm only a woodcutter. All I know is chopping wood till my muscles are numb and my hands look like horned toads. (HE LOOKS AT THEM RUEFULLY.)

PRIEST

(HALF TO HIMSELF.) Earthquakes--

WOODCUTTER

Huh?

PRIEST

--fire, famine, pestilence--

WOODCUTTER

These are natural things, like rain and sun. They're not supposed to make sense.

PRIEST

And yet they do! An earthquake's violence I can understand. (RISING.) But the savagery of men toward one another, and to themselves--(HE CROSSES TO GATE RIGHT AND STANDS LOOKING OFF TOWARD THE ROAD LEADING AWAY FROM THE CITY.)

WOODCUTTER

There's no more shelter along that road. I know it well.  
(LOOKING AROUND.) This is a fearsome place--but it is  
better to wait here till the storm breaks.

PRIEST

(TURNS BACK, HIS EYES WANDERING OVER THEIR REFUGE.) The  
great Rashomon Gate--It crumbles--like the people.

(FROM THE DIRECTION OF KYOTO, THE TEMPLE BELLS SOUND THE  
HOUR.)

WOODCUTTER

(LOOKING OFF.) The Temple bells--they sound far away in the  
rain. (EMBARRASSEDLY.) I myself seldom go to the Temple.  
My clothes always smell of rotting wood. (TURNS TO THE  
PRIEST.) But I've heard them speak of you. They say you've  
taught the people much.

PRIEST

(BITTERLY.) You were with me at the court yesterday. You  
saw how well they learned.

WOODCUTTER

I can't understand it. (ONE STEP DOWN.) Such horrible  
crimes-- rape, bloodshed. And then, in front of the Magis-  
trate to make it all--worse--(SHAKING HIS HEAD.) There  
must be an answer, but I'm too ignorant to know what it is.

PRIEST

No more ignorant than I.

WOODCUTTER

(TURNS TO THE PRIEST.) That's not so! You're a holy man--  
a wise man--

PRIEST

(WITH RISING EMOTION.) Am I? Then why do those faces burn in my mind just as in yours--and those monstrous words echo in my ears, calling for answers I cannot give? (HE CROSSES BACK TO GATE LEFT. THERE'S A DISTANT ROLL OF THUNDER. THE WOODCUTTER LOOKS UPWARD, UNEASILY.) The all-seeing Buddha knows--he knows how unworthy I am. (HE SINKS DOWN.)

WOODCUTTER

(ONE STEP UP. HE BENDS OVER THE PRIEST.) Please--don't say that.

PRIEST

My father was a rich mirror-maker in Kiwa. He didn't want me to be a priest, but I wanted it. A man doesn't look for his soul in a mirror, I told him. (HE TURNS AWAY WEARILY.) Perhaps my father was right.

WOODCUTTER

(STARES AT HIM, AT A LOSS.) Where will you go?

PRIEST

I don't know--I don't know--

WIGMAKER

(FROM ABOVE.) Why don't you go to one of the eight fiery hells? (THE SUDDENNESS OF THE VOICE STARTLES A FEW CROWS AND THEY CAW COMPLAININGLY. THE PRIEST AND WOODCUTTER, STARTLED TOO, LOOK UP WHERE THE SOUNDS CAME FROM.) Can't find a place to sleep in peace anymore--(HE APPEARS FROM REAR GATE.)

WOODCUTTER

(TURNING TO THE PRIEST APPREHENSIVELY.) Let's go to another part of the gate, holy one.

PRIEST

Why?

WOODCUTTER

Please--you never know what you'll encounter here.

WIGMAKER

(COMING DOWN.) Caw--caw--caw!

WOODCUTTER

(TURNING TO HIM.) Hold your tongue, you scavenger!

WIGMAKER

(HE STOPS.) Hold my tongue? What about your tongue-- and the hairless one's?

WOODCUTTER

(ANGRILY.) Don't be so low! This is a priest you're talking to.

WIGMAKER

(HE CROSSES TO GATE RIGHT.) Impossible. He woke me up. They usually put me to sleep.

WOODCUTTER

(TO PRIEST, PROTECTIVELY.) Please don't listen--

PRIEST

Who is he?

WOODCUTTER

He's a thief, a jackal--an old swindler!

WIGMAKER

How else can you live to be old nowadays? (TO THE PRIEST, WITH A MOCK-FORMAL BOW.) If you want to know--I'm a wig-maker.

WOODCUTTER

Wigmaker! With hair stolen from corpses!

WIGMAKER

The very fine corpses in Kyoto. Interred by their loved ones in the dung-heaps of the Rashomon Gate. The crows and I administer the last rites. (TO THE PRIEST.) Now that you're giving up the priesthood, maybe I can make a wig for you--a long, fancy one. (THE PRIEST RISES AND MOVES AWAY, AND THE WIGMAKER SHAKES HIS HEAD, GRINNING.) Excuse me--I'm not used to such tender sensibilities around here. My friends, the corpses, never take offense at anything. There's one, for instance, a female--beautiful black hair--used to sell dried snake meat to the soldiers. Told them it was a fish. She'd still be doing it, if the plague hadn't gotten her. I'm sure she'd understand. (SQUATTING DOWN BESIDE THE FIRE.) Oh, you'd like them all now. They've given up gossip, cursing, stealing, fighting. Sure, they stink a little, but no more than some live ones I know.

WOODCUTTER

(GLARES AT HIM, THEN TURNS TO THE PRIEST.) He's as bad as the three at the police court yesterday.

WIGMAKER

(OVER HIS SHOULDER.) As bad as I am? Now, that interests me. Who were they? (AS THEY'RE SILENT.) What happened?

WOODCUTTER

(AFTER A MOMENT, GRUDGINGLY.) A man was murdered.

WIGMAKER

Just one? A slow say.

(AFTER A MOMENT, THE WOODCUTTER SHUFFLES OVER AND KNEELS DOWN BESIDE THE FIRE, TOO, WARMING HIS HANDS AS THE WIGMAKER FANS THE FEEBLE FLAMES.)

WOODCUTTER

It wasn't the murder alone. It was--we were called, both of us, to testify.

WIGMAKER

Why?

WOODCUTTER

It was I who found the body.

WIGMAKER

(IMPRESSED.) Where?

WOODCUTTER

In the woods. East of the city. It was late in the afternoon, at the hour of the ox. It's too hot these days, even in the forest, to cut wood in the middle of the day. So I wait until--

WIGMAKER

(IMPATIENTLY.) And you came upon this body?

WOODCUTTER

No. I mean, not at first. First, I saw the sedge hat, with a veil on it, dangling from a bush--

WIGMAKER

A woman's?

WOODCUTTER

Yes. It looked odd hanging there--women don't come into the forest very often. I called, but there was no answer. So I went on. And a few steps farther I saw a tortoise-shell comb on the path--and then a piece of rope. And then-- (HE STOPS.)

WIGMAKER

(EAGERLY.) Yes--? (SEE FIGURE 2.)

WOODCUTTER

And then--an arm. Just an arm, sticking out from a clump of bamboo shoots--the fingers all stiff and twisted. For a moment I thought it was some strange plant. Then, in the shadows behind it I saw the face, eyes empty and staring, the mouth gaping--

WIGMAKER

I know, they always look surprised. Death must be a lot different than anyone imagines.

WOODCUTTER

I ran--the brush tore at my legs and arms till they bled. But I didn't stop till I reached the police and told them. (MOPPING HIS FACE.) And then, yesterday, they asked us to appear.

WIGMAKER

(REMEMBERING THE PRIEST.) But--what did he have to do with it?

WOODCUTTER

He saw them both, on their way--before they entered the forest.

PRIEST

(TURNS AND CROSSES TO GATE LEFT.) Yes. The murdered man's



FIGURE 2

wife. I passed them on the road from Sekiyama, in the early afternoon. He looked so formidable in his samurai robes--his sword at his side. He looked so--(WITH A SIGH.)--so alive.

WIGMAKER

How was he killed?

WOODCUTTER

Run through--with a sword.

PRIEST

But no weapon was found.

WIGMAKER

(TO THE WOODCUTTER.) And you saw none?

WOODCUTTER

What? (TURNS HIS HEAD AWAY.) No, no--the hand, the face, was all I saw. I ran out of there fast!

WIGMAKER

Everyone's always running away from the dead. What can a corpse do? Take my advice--run from the live ones. (FALLS BACK ON THE TOP STEP OF THE GATE.) Any idea who did the sticking?

WOODCUTTER

It's Tajomaru.

WIGMAKER

(SITS UP.) Tajomaru! Then for once they've gotten the right man.

PRIEST

I'm not sure.

WIGMAKER

(RISING INCREDULOUSLY.) The most dangerous bandit in this part of the country and you're not sure? If he were within twenty miles of any crime, I'd convict him of it!

PRIEST

(SLOWLY SITS DOWN.) It's not quite so simple--

WIGMAKER

(MIMICKING HIS TONE.) Not quite so simple. (With growing anger.) If it were me they caught, it would be simple enough! (CROSSES TO THE PRIEST.) Steal a coin, a pair of sandals, a chicken so scrawny you can't get your teeth into it--pull a hair from the dead of some poor cadaver who has no more use for it--and you're a sneak thief, lower than a viper. But rob someone of a fortune--kill, rape, plunder, loot in a big way--and soon you're a figure of a magic name. Soon they're talking about you. Soon you're a someone to be reckoned with--and "it's not quite so simple!" (HE SPITS ON THE GROUND DISGUSTEDLY, AND CROSSES BACK TO GATE RIGHT.)

PRIEST

You weren't there--you don't know the things he said.

WIGMAKER

(STANDING.) Well, what did he say--Tajomaru? (QUICKLY.) Not that I'd believe a word of it.

WOODCUTTER

(TO THE PRIEST.) He sounds just like the Deputy in the police court.

WIGMAKER

(SITTING.) Deputy? What deputy?

WOODCUTTER

The one who captured Tajomaru. He used almost the same words when he talked to the Magistrate. "Your Excellency," he said, "this is Tajomaru, the killer, the rapist, the plunderer, the terror of our roads and forests. As proof of his guilt--I submit--"

(AS THE WOODCUTTER SPEAKS, THE VOICE OF THE DEPUTY GRADUALLY TAKES OVER. AT THE SAME TIME, THE LIGHTS ON THE RASHOMON GATE SLOWLY DIM OUT AS OTHERS COME UP ON THE POLICE COURT. THE DEPUTY IS KNEELING ON THE GROUND FACING THE UNSEEN MAGISTRATE WHO IS IN THE POSITION OF THE AUDIENCE, AND HOLDING A SCROLL OPENED TO A CONSIDERABLE LENGTH. NEXT TO HIM, THE BANDIT, TAJOMARU, SITS INDOLENTLY GAZING UPWARD, HIS WRISTS BOUND BEHIND HIM.)

DEPUTY

(CONTINUING THE WOODCUTTER'S SPEECH.) --I submit to you his record, a list of the crimes absolutely known to have been committed by him. Unfortunately, there was not sufficient time to complete it. (HE BOWS.) . . . Thank you, Your Excellency. (ROLLING UP THE SCROLL.) It was in the early hours of night on the river beach of Katsura. I came upon him groaning on the sand. (AS TAJOMARU SNORTS WITHOUT LOOKING AT HIM.) . . . Wearing? (WITH A GLANCE AT TAJOMARU.) The same as now. Also a large plain sword. . . . No, there was no sign of a woman around. He was alone, and in great agony. (SMIRKING. AS TAJOMARU LAUGHS DERISIVELY, HE STOPS, THEN CONTINUES HESITANTLY.) As I said, I went over to where he had fallen, and--I captured him.

TAJOMARU

(HE SPITS AT THE DEPUTY, WHO RETREATS A LITTLE.) Captured me! I was sick--poisoned! (CONTEMPTOUSLY.) Captured me! (WITH ONE FOOT, HE KICKS AT THE DEPUTY, WHO RECOILS.) Go away, little bug, before I step on you!

DEPUTY

(TO MAGISTRATE, PROTESTINGLY.) Your Excellency--

TAJOMARU

(TO THE MAGISTRATE.) Do we have to listen all day to this

puffing about what a great hero he is? You want to know what happened? I'll tell it myself.

DEPUTY

But I just-- (AS THE MAGISTRATE OBVIOUSLY DISMISSES HIM, HE BOWS DEEPLY AND STANDS UP.) . . . Yes, Your Excellency, as you wish. (STILL BOWING, HE BACKS OFF INTO THE DARKNESS AND DISAPPEARS.)

TAJOMARU

Tajomaru captured--Hah! It was hot--I got thirsty. Near the Ohsaka Pass is a stream--you may know it--the water comes down sweet from the mountains. But it wasn't sweet this day. Something must have poisoned it--a dead serpent, maybe, in the upper stream. I drank the water and then my belly began to swell. I got dizzy. I don't feel pain like other men, but this-- (HIS FACE CONTORTS.) Near the river bed I couldn't bear it any longer. I doubled over on the ground and-- (HE STOPS, DOUBLED OVER, REMEMBERING THE AGONY. THEN HE SHAKES OFF THE WEAK MOMENT.) Tajomaru captured! Only a fool could have a such foolish idea. (AS THE MAGISTRATE DIRECTS A QUESTION TO HIM.) . . . The man? Did I kill him? (HE SHRUGS.) I know I'll hang from a tree on the execution ground no matter what I say. I can see you've decided the time has come for me to pay for my crimes--the ones I've done, the ones you think I've done and the ones you're afraid I might do. So why should I lie? (BREAKING HIS BOUNDS IN A GESTURE OF STRENGTH AND DEFIANCE.) Yes, it was I, Tajomaru, who killed the man! . . . Why? (HE SMILES.) Because of a little breeze. (MUSIC. "IN THE GROVE".) . . . You heard it right. A little breeze that swept through the green leaves. If it hadn't been for that, the man would never have been killed. (HE RISES, AND MOVES TO SC. AS THE LIGHTS START SLOWLY TO DIM ON THE POLICE COURT AND COME UP ON THE PATHWAY IN THE FOREST.) And when your legs grow heavy-- (HE STRETCHES.) --there's only one thing--to do--

(THE LIGHTS ARE OUT ON THE COURT NOW AND UP FULL ON THE FOREST. TAJOMARU LIES AGAINST THE TREE ON CTR. STRETCHING OUT, HE SCRATCHES HIMSELF LUXURIOUSLY, CLOSING HIS EYES. RAISE "IN THE GROVE." THERE IS A LONG, QUIET PAUSE. THEN, FROM THE DEPTHS OF THE FOREST SR., THE HUSBAND AND WIFE APPEAR. THE HUSBAND IS DRESSED IN THE ROBE OF A SAMURAI WARRIOR, WEARS A SWORD WITH AN ELABORATE SILVER HANDLE. HIS BEARING SHOW BREEDING AND POSITION AS CONTRASTED WITH THE GROSS ANIMAL VIRILITY OF THE BANDIT. HIS WIFE IS FOLLOWING ON FOOT. SHE IS DRESSED IN A KIMONO OF BRILLIANT HUE, RICH

BUT SUITABLE FOR TRAVELING. SHE WEARS A LARGE SEDGE HAT FROM WHICH IS DRAPED A LONG VEIL THAT COMPLETELY OBSCURES HER FACE. THE HUSBAND, NOTICING TAJOMARU, STOPS SUSPICIOUSLY. TAJAMARU OPENS HIS EYES DROWSILY FOR A MOMENT, THEN CLOSES THEM AGAIN. THE HUSBAND AND WIFE CONTINUE THEIR WAY. TAJOMARU'S EYES OPEN SLEEPILY AS THEY'RE GETTING CLOSER. HIS EYES REMAIN OPEN AS THE PAIR CONTINUES ACROSS THE STAGE. HE LIES THERE FOR A SECOND, TENSELY NOW, THEN SITS UP, TURNING HIS HEAD TO LOOK AFTER THEM. AS THEY ARE ABOUT TO EXIT, HE JUMPS UP ABRUPTLY, SIMULTANEOUSLY PICKING UP HIS SWORD WHICH WAS LYING BY HIS SIDE.)

#### TAJOMARU

Ey! (THE HUSBAND WHEELS. HE LOOKS AT TAJOMARU. TAJOMARU LOOKS UP AT THE WOMAN, BACK AT THE MAN. THE HUSBAND'S HAND GOES SLOWLY TOWARD HIS SWORD. FADE OUT "IN THE GROVE". NOTICING THE HUSBAND'S ACTION.) That's a fancy sword. (THE HUSBAND'S HAND RESTS ON IT.) Silver handle? (THE HUSBAND DOESN'T ANSWER. TAJOMARU LAUGHS REASSURINGLY, STICKING HIS OWN SWORD IN HIS BELT.) Thirsty? (THE HUSBAND WATCHES HIM, NON-COMMITTAL. TAJOMARU TAKES A WATER POUCH FROM HIS BELT, HOLDS IT OUT IN A FRIENDLY GESTURE. THE HUSBAND DOES NOT MOVE. TAJOMARU GRINS AND TAKES A SWALLOW HIMSELF TO SHOW THAT THE WATER IS NOT POISONED.) You have no water pouches and it's two miles to the next stream. (THE HUSBAND WETS HIS DRY LIPS WITH HIS TONGUE, WEIGHING THE OFFER. THEN HE TAKES THE WATER POUCH, OFFERS IT TO THE WIFE. SHE SHAKES HER HEAD. THE HUSBAND LIFTS THE POUCH TO HIS LIPS AND DRINKS DEEPLY, THEN TOSSES THE POUCH BACK TO TAJOMARU.) Going to Kyoto? (SEE FIGURE 3.)

#### HUSBAND

Passing through. (HE TURNS TO SL. AS IF TO START AGAIN.)

#### TAJOMARU

You like swords? (THE HUSBAND TURNS BACK AND LOOKS AT HIM.) Silver handles like yours--gold handles--stones in them, red, green? (THE HUSBAND TRIES TO MASK HIS INTEREST.) There's an ancient tomb in the mountain. I came across it--dug it open. It was full of things like that. (SHRUGGING.) They're no good to me. If you're interested, I'll sell you some, cheap.



FIGURE 3

HUSBAND

(AFTER A LONG MOMENT.) Gold handles?

TAJOMARU

With stones. Red, green--

HUSBAND

(THERE'S A MOMENT--THEN HE SHAKES HIS HEAD.) No. (HE TURNS TO GO.)

TAJOMARU

(AS THOUGH UNCONCERNED.) All right--I'll sell them to someone else. (HE STARTS AWAY TO SR.)

HUSBAND

(LOOKS AFTER TAJOMARU, TEMPTATION FIGHTING IT OUT WITH CAUTION. ABRUPTLY.) Where are they?

TAJOMARU

(TURNING QUICKLY.) Over there, in that next grove. (CROSSING AND POINTING OFF UR.) See--beyond the bamboos, where the cedars are.

HUSBAND

(HIS EYES FOLLOW THE POINTING FINGER. HE STUDIES TAJOMARU NARROWLY. FINALLY MAKING THE DECISION.) Wait.

(HE CROSSES TO HIS WIFE AND ASKS HER TO WAIT. THEN HE COMES BACK TO TAJOMARU, WHO MAKES AN OBSEQUIOUS GESTURE, AS IF TO SAY, "AFTER YOU." THE HUSBAND TURNS AND GOES OFF SR. TAJOMARU STARTS TO FOLLOW, THEN SLOWS UP AND STOPS, LOOKING AFTER HIM. HE TURNS BACK, AS THE LIGHTS SLOWLY START TO DIM ON THE FOREST.)

TAJOMARU

As I said--a little puff of air. And I saw a woman's face. Or was it a vision?

(HE MOVES INTO THE POLICE COURT ON WHICH THE LIGHTS ARE COMING UP.)

I had to know. In that first moment, I made up my mind to take her. Even if I had to kill the man. (HE SQUATS DOWN, FACING THE MAGISTRATE.) To me, killing isn't a matter of great importance. Blood is ugly to you "polite" people who kill with power and money instead of the sword. Sometimes you even say it's for their own good, the ones you destroy. They don't squirm or cry or bleed--they're in the best of health. But all the same-- (HE STOPS AT THE MAGISTRATE'S OBVIOUS REPRIMAND.) . . . I am giving you the facts. Didn't I say I killed the man? You asked me why. I kill to live, to eat, to have pleasure. Whenever I capture a woman, I always have to kill her man. But this time, it's funny-- this time I didn't mean to kill him. I thought if I could take a woman once without killing the man, it would be-- (THERE'S A PAUSE. THEN HE SHRUGS, UNABLE TO EXPLAIN IT.) --So I made my plans to get him out of the way and have the woman alone. It was easy. He was greedy, like all of them are. He went with me to the bamboo grove. When we got there, I seized him from behind. He was a trained warrior and strong --I had to take him by surprise. He struggled like a trapped tiger. But I tied him up to the root of a tree. (HE SHAKES HIS HEAD RUEFULLY AT THE MEMORY OF THE STRUGGLE.) Then I thought of the woman--(THE LIGHTS START TO COME UP ON THE FOREST.)--all alone there, waiting for him. (HE RISES, STARTS BACKING TOWARD THE FOREST.) And I went back to her.

(THE LIGHTS DIM QUICKLY ON THE POLICE COURT AS THE FOREST LIGHTING COMES UP FULL. TAJOMARU TURNS, RUNS STEALTHILY INTO THE WOODS AND CROUCHES BEHIND A BUSH WHICH IS ON SC. THE WIFE IS WALKING AMONG THE TREES. THE BIRD CHIRPS. THE WIFE ANSWERS HIM. TAJOMARU WATCHES HER INTENTLY FROM BEHIND THE BUSH. SUDDENLY, AS IF SOMEHOW AWARE OF THE EYES ON HER, SHE WHEELS TOWARD THE BUSH. TAJOMARU, CAUGHT, RISES AND EMERGES AWKWARDLY.)

#### TAJOMARU

Your husband--he says to wait here. He--he's picking out what he wants-- (THE WIFE FACES HIM, SILENTLY, AS HE COMES CLOSER.) There are many things for him to look at. Swords and mirrors. It will take him-- (ABRUPTLY. SHE LIFTS THE VEIL AND STARES UP AT HIM. HE STOPS AT THE FULL SIGHT OF HER FACE--DELICATE, EXQUISITE--HIS WORDS TRICKLING OFF.)-- some--time-- (THERE'S A LONG SILENCE AS THEY LOOK AT EACH OTHER.)

WIFE

What have you done with him? (TAJOMARU DOESN'T ANSWER. HER EYES SEARCH HIS DESPERATELY FOR A LONG MOMENT. THEN SUDDENLY SHE RUNS PAST HIM OFF RIGHT.)

TAJOMARU

(STANDS LOOKING AFTER HER.) I could have stopped her--

(THE LIGHTING CHANGES AS HE MOVES TOWARD THE POLICE COURT, STILL LOOKING AFTER HER.)

But that look on her face--the eyes wide and startled, like a deer, the lips trembling-- (FACING THE MAGISTRATE.) It made me jealous--jealous that he could make her look like that. Suddenly, I wanted her to see the ugly sight of him tied to the tree--weak, helpless, looking like a fool-- (SHAKING HIS HEAD.) I can't understand it, even now. Anyway--I let her go to him. And I followed-- (HE TURNS AND DISAPPEARS INTO THE FOREST.)

(BLACKOUT. THE PLATFORM REVOLVES TO SHOW ANOTHER PART OF THE FOREST--THE CLEARING IN THE BAMBOO GROVE. THE LIGHTS ON THE FOREST ARE SLOWLY COMING UP. HIS HANDS TIED BEHIND HIM, THE HUSBAND IS SECURED TO A TREE STUMP CTR., STRAINING IN-EFFECTUALLY AGAINST HIS BONDS. THE WIFE APPEARS FROM SL., HER SEDGE HAT LOST EN ROUTE. SEARCHING IN AND OUT AMONG THE TREES, SHE FINALLY STOPS SHORT AT THE SIGHT OF HER HUSBAND. THEY STARE AT EACH OTHER--SHE, HORRIED. TAJOMARU APPEARS, COMING UP BEHIND THE WIFE. THE WIFE SLOWLY TURNS TO LOOK AT HIM, THEN BACK TO THE HUSBAND, SUDDENLY, SHE PULLS A DAGGER CONCEALED IN HER ROBE AND LEAPS AT TAJOMARU. HE ELUDES HER AND SHE CHASES HIM, LASHING OUT WILDLY WITH THE DAGGER. THE HUSBAND STRAINS IN VAIN AGAINST HIS BONDS. SUDDENLY CATCHING THE WOMAN'S WRIST, TAJOMARU BENDS IT UNTIL, WITH A CRY, SHE DROPS THE DAGGER. THEN, HOLDING HER WRITHING BODY, HIS MOUTH SEEKS HERS, HIS ARMS BENDING HER TO HIS EMBRACE. THE HUSBAND CLOSES HIS EYES, TURNING HIS HEAD AWAY FROM THE SIGHT. UNDER TAJOMARU'S LIPS, THE WIFE STRUGGLES WILDLY, THEN GRADUALLY THE STRUGGLE GROWS LESS. AND THEN, AFTER A LONG MOMENT, HER HAND MOVES SUBTLY ALONG TAJOMARU'S BACK TO CLASP HIM IN A RETURNING EMBRACE. BLACKOUT.)

(THERE'S SUDDENLY THE SOUND OF THE WIGMAKER'S RAUCOUS LAUGH FROM THE DARKNESS. THE LIGHTS SIMULTANEOUSLY FADE IN ON THE RASHOMON GATE.)

WIGMAKER

(ENJOYING IT VICARIOUSLY.) That's Tajomaru all right! No mistake. Even among bandits, he's famous for his lechery. (RISES AND MOVES CLOSER TO THE OTHER TWO.) Just two months ago, in the mountain pass behind the Toribe Temple, a lady of the court was waylaid, with her mother and daughter. Three pieces of fruit from the same tree. Which one do you think Tajomaru picked? (LOOKING AT THEM EXPECTANTLY, AS THEY'RE SILENT.) The lady? The daughter? The mother? (HE LAUGHS BOISTEROUSLY.) All three of them! (CROSSES BACK TO GATE RIGHT.)

WOODCUTTER

(OUTRAGED.) Tajomaru's a savage--a wild beast!

WIGMAKER

But the women seem to like it. Especially the high-born ones with airs and downcast eyes. Show them a man with sweat on him and their tongues grow big in their mouths. (HE ILLUSTRATES HIS POINT VULGARLY. THE PRIEST RISES AND CROSSES AWAY TO REAR GATE.)

WOODCUTTER

(RISES ANGRILY.) Have you no respect? To talk so before a priest--!

WIGMAKER

He said he's giving it up. (WITH A SHRUG.) If he's going to join the rest of us, he may as well start learning the language. (THE WOODCUTTER MOVES DOWN TWO STEPS, AND SITS. THEN THE WIGMAKER SLOWLY SITS DOWN BESIDE THE BONFIRE. A LONG PAUSE.) All right, tell me more. Your story warms me more than this sickly fire. (WITH A GRIMACE.) What else did he say--Tajomaru?

WOODCUTTER

Nothing!

WIGMAKER

Nothing? I don't believe it. Half the pleasure of taking a woman is talking about it afterwards. (APPEASINGLY.) Come on, he must've said something more. (TO THE PRIEST.) Didn't he?

PRIEST

(TURNS AND MOVES DOWN TO GATE LEFT SLOWLY.) Yes, he said--more. He said--he never meant to kill.

(THE LIGHTS FADE OUT ON THE GATE AND COME UP ON THE COURT--AS TAJOMARU APPEARS OUT OF THE DARKNESS TO FACE THE MAGISTRATE AGAIN.)

TAJOMARU

(SITTING.) That's the way I planned it--without killing . . . . That's right, without killing the husband. All I wanted was the woman. (HE STOPS, REMEMBERING.) I've had many women. When you think about it later, there's not much difference in them. Some fight you, some don't. But this one-- (PUZZLED.) I don't know-- (RISING.) I was sure her body was eager, her mouth hot under mine. And yet, when I stood up from her, she just lay there--crying-- (THE LIGHTS COME UP ON THE FOREST. THE WIFE IS LYING ON THE GROUND SC., CRYING SOFTLY. THE HUSBAND SITS, HIS EYES TIGHTLY SHUT, HIS FACE TAUT WITH ANGER AND HUMILIATION. TAJOMARU STRIDES INTO THE SCENE. HE PACES PAST THE WIFE, STOPS, LOOKS AT HER IMPATIENTLY, PACES BACK AGAIN, STANDS BEHIND HER.)

TAJOMARU

Oh, stop that! (HE WALKS AWAY, THEN TURNS BACK.) I didn't hurt you--you're not going to die! (AFTER A MOMENT, AS SHE KEEPS ON CRYING.) Stop it, I tell you! There's your husband--untie him and go on your way. (WITH A GESTURE OF DISMISSAL, HE TURNS AND STARTS TO EXIT OFF SL. THE WIFE SITS UP AND TURNS TOWARD HIM.)

WIFE

Wait--please--

TAJOMARU

(STOPS AND TURNS.) What do you want?

WIFE

How can I live--disgraced in the eyes of two men?

TAJOMARU

(LOOKS AT HER NARROWLY.) What does it matter what I think of you? You'll never see me again.

WIFE

I'll always see you. (CLOSING HER EYES TO THE HORROR OF IT.) Awake or asleep--this grove, this tree, this piece of ground--I'll see it all till I die. (AS THE BANDIT SMILES, NOT DISPLEASED WITH THE THOUGHT, SHE TURNS HER TEAR-FILLED EYES TOWARD HIM.) At least, give my husband a chance to avenge my honor--and his own.

TAJOMARU

Why should I?

WIFE

I beg you.

TAJOMARU

This is no place to worry about honor.

WIFE

(WITH GREAT DIFFICULTY.) Give him a chance. If he fails, I'll--go with you--be your woman. (TAJOMARU STANDS, EVALUATING HER. HER EYES LOWER UNDER HIS GAZE.) Even a bandit must have some feeling--some sense of justice.

TAJOMARU

Justice? (HE SNORTS AT THE CRUDITY OF THIS TRAP.) He's a samurai, trained in the art of fighting. Do you think I'm a fool to let you trap me with pretty words--so that he can kill me? (A SHORT PAUSE.) Or could I be wrong? Are you hoping, maybe, that I'll kill him? Would that be more to your liking? (PROVOCATIVELY.) There are always women. Why should I take a chance for you?

(FOR A LONG MOMENT, HER DESPERATE EYES SEARCH HIS. THEN, ABRUPTLY, SHE CRAWLS OVER AND PICKS UP HER DAGGER LYING ON THE GROUND NEAR THEM. AS THE HUSBAND STRUGGLES VAINLY AGAINST HIS BONDS, SHE RAISES THE DAGGER TO PLUNGE IT INTO HER THROAT. BUT TAJOMARU SPRINGS FORWARD, WRENCHES IT FROM HER HAND AND TOSSES IT AWAY. WITH AN EXULTANT LAUGH, HE GRASPS HER BY THE HAIR AND KISSES HER ROUGHLY. THEN, PUSHING HER AWAY, HE CROSSES TO THE HUSBAND, DRAWS HIS SWORD AND CUTS THE HUSBAND'S BONDS--AT THE SAME TIME, LEAPING BACK, SWORD RAISED. THE HUSBAND SPRINGS TO HIS FEET AND DRAWS HIS OWN SWORD. ALL OVER THE GROVE, THEY ATTACK AND DEFEND, EACH IN TURN--TENSELY, GRIMLY--BOTH AWARE THAT THEY ARE FIGHTING TO THE DEATH. THE WIFE, WATCHING THIS FATEFUL STRUGGLE, SHRINKS FARTHER AND FARTHER INTO THE SHADOWS BEHIND HER AND EXITS UL. FINALLY, AFTER AN INTRICATE EXCHANGE, THE HUSBAND STRIKES A WELL-TIMED BLOW THAT SENDS TAJOMARU'S SWORD FLYING FROM HIS HANDS. FOLLOWING UP THIS ADVANTAGE, HE AIMS A HEAD CUT AT TAJOMARU WHO, FLINGING HIMSELF AWAY FROM THE BLOW, FALLS FLAT ON HIS BACK. TAJOMARU TRIES TO SLITHER AWAY ON HIS BACK, BUT THE HUSBAND IS CLOSE ON HIM, THE SWORD POINT NEVER LEAVING HIS THROAT. AS TAJOMARU'S MUSCLES SEEM TO GO LIMP IN APPARENT RESIGNATION, THE HUSBAND TAKES A SOLID STANCE AND RAISES THE SWORD FOR THE FINISHING BLOW, BUT TAJOMARU, WITH ANIMAL-LIKE CUNNING, SWIFTLY GRABS BOTH HIS LEGS AND SLAMS HIM TO THE GROUND. THE SWORD FLIES FROM THE HUSBAND'S GRASP. THERE'S A WILDLY DESPERATE SCRAMBLE AS EACH TRIES TO REACH THE WEAPON AND PREVENT THE OTHER FROM DOING SO. TAJOMARU GETS TO HIS FEET, IS TRIPPED BY THE HUSBAND WHO CRAWLS FOR THE SWORD. BUT TAJOMARU RECOVERS IN TIME TO RUN OVER AND SHOVE THE HUSBAND INTO A CLUMP OF BAMBOO JUST AS HE'S REACHING FOR THE SWORD. PANTING, TAJOMARU PICKS UP THE WEAPON HIMSELF AND PLUNGES IT DOWN TO ITS FATAL CONCLUSION. THERE'S A CHILLING CRY FROM THE BAMBOO CLUMP. THEN SILENCE. TAJOMARU STRAIGHTENS SLOWLY, STRUGGLING FOR BREATH, AND STANDS FOR A MOMENT LOOKING DOWN AT THE DEAD MAN. THEN, COMING BACK TO THE CENTER OF THE CLEARING, HE LOOKS AROUND FOR THE WIFE, BUT SHE IS NOWHERE IN SIGHT. HE TURNS SLOWLY AND STARTS TOWARD THE COURT.)

TAJOMARU

He fought very well. (THE LIGHTS FADE OUT ON THE FOREST AND COME UP ON THE POLICE COURT AS TAJOMARU STEPS INTO IT, FACING THE MAGISTRATE.) Too well. Trained warriors should fight other trained warriors. In the jungle, they haven't got a chance. (APPRECIATIVELY.) Still, he fought very well. . . . The woman? (HE SHRUGS, SITTING ON THE FLOOR, INDIFFERENTLY.) How do I know? She must have run away--she was nowhere around. I found her dagger on the path, so I took it. And I sold it for drinks, lots of drinks--it had a mother-of-pearl handle. (HE LAUGHS IRONICALLY. THEN, AT A QUESTION FROM THE MAGISTRATE, HE SHAKES HIS HEAD.) . . . No, I didn't look for her. It must have been her temper that attracted me. But she was--just a woman, after all.

(THE LIGHTS DARKEN ON THE POLICE COURT AND COME UP ON THE RASHOMON GATE. THE THREE MEN ARE HUDDLED AROUND THE FIRE.)

WIGMAKER

He didn't look for her-- (HE SNORTS.) No wonder. One of these days they'll find her, face down, in a gully.

WOODCUTTER

What do you mean?

WIGMAKER

What's another killing to a man like Tajomaru?

PRIEST

No, he didn't kill her.

WOODCUTTER

The woman appeared at the police court.

WIGMAKER

(STOPS LAUGHING.) She appeared?

WOODCUTTER

The police found her--near a shrine, not far away. She was hiding there.

WIGMAKER

Well, she won't have to hide anymore. With Tajomaru's confession and with her there to accuse him, he'll hang before morning. (THERE'S AN ODDLY-HUMAN CAWING SOUND.)

WOODCUTTER

(STARTLED.) What's that noise?

WIGMAKER

(LOOKING UPWARD.) The crows. They love to hear about hangings. (HE LAUGHS.)

PRIEST

(RISING SLOWLY.) But the wife--she didn't accuse him. She told a completely different story.

WIGMAKER

Different? How could it be different? Tajomaru confessed, didn't he?

PRIEST

(LOOKING TOWARD THE COURT.) It's odd, but I found her not at all as Tajomaru described her. Nothing of worldliness, of vanity--of temper. Watching her there, I saw a face so delicate and defenseless--the eyes, like those of a bird with a broken wing you hold in your hand--

(AS HE DESCRIBES THE WIFE, A SPOTLIGHT FADES IN, PINPOINTING HER FACE. SLOWLY, THE LIGHTS FADE OUT ON THE RASHOMON GATE AND COME UP ON THE REST OF THE POLICE COURT. THE WIFE IS SITTING ON THE FLOOR STARING EMPTILY. KNEELING ON THE RIGHT SIDE OF HER IS AN ELDERLY WOMAN WHO'S BOWING TO THE MAGISTRATE.)

MOTHER

. . . Yes, Your Excellency. This is my daughter, Kinume-- my only daughter--my poor child who stares at me with vacant eyes-- (NODDING RESIGNEDLY.) I can see it in your face-- you're surprised to see a beautiful lotus risen from such a muddy pond. The Goddess of Fertility was good to me. Seven years I prayed to her, seven childless years. And in the eighth year, in the month of the cherry-flower--Kinume was born. Like a cherry-flower herself, tiny and delicate and fragrant in my arms. (PROUDLY.) And I always kept her so. Not like the other children in their commonplace robes, but in a long-sleeved, many-colored dress of rare silk, her hair caught up with a tortoise comb. Each morning she went to the writing school--never stumbling or dirtying her dainty hands (TOUCHES KINUME'S HANDS. SEE FIGURE 4.) --carrying her copy-books with such grace all eyes turned to watch-- (BROUGHT BACK ABRUPTLY BY THE MAGISTRATE, SHE BOWS.) . . . Forgive me, Your Excellency. But, seeing my daughter again, I-- (SHE BOWS.) . . . Yes, it is so. The dead man I looked upon was her husband. His name was Takehiko. He was a samurai in the town of Kofu--a very noble man, very rich. I'm sure he did nothing to bring such a horrible death on himself. (SHAKING HER HEAD.) Horrible! I hope you'll bring the villain who murdered him to justice. These bandits who roam our lands and prey upon us like wild beasts--they should be dealt with like wild beasts! (LISTENING.) . . . When, Your Excellency? Four years ago they were married. It was a big wedding--the joining of two fine families. (CONFIDENTLY.) You have only to look at her to understand that my daughter was much sought-after. She had many offers, all of very high rank. But Takehiko was the most eager--and the most worthy. Even so, she was very proud--I had to persuade her to marry him--

WIFE

(ABRUPTLY.) Have you no shame? (THE MOTHER TURNS, STARTLED, TO FACE HER DAUGHTER'S TORTURED EYES.) To stand in the presence of death--and still have vanity?

MOTHER

(TURNING TO THE MAGISTRATE, NERVOUSLY.) You must excuse her, Your Excellency. Her mind is still unclear--the shock of her ordeal--



FIGURE 4

WIFE

(TO THE MAGISTRATE.) My husband was a samurai in Kofu. And my mother was a maid-servant in his house. (THERE IS A MOMENT, THEN THE MOTHER LOWERS HER HEAD.)

MOTHER

(BROKENLY.) What does it matter if it pleases me to tickle myself with small fancies? It hurts no one.

WIFE

It is no time for fancies--even small ones. (TURNING TO THE MAGISTRATE.) She was a good and trusted servant. That's also something to be proud of. Very often I helped her draw the water from the well and stirred it round with pine leaves, brought it in a crystal bowl for his bedchamber. From the time I was a child, I learned to follow the gold threads in his robe with my needle. And with my eyes I watched him--and loved him--never thinking, never daring to think it was possible. It seemed he never looked at me, except as you look at a window and see past it. And then, one day-- (HER FACE REFLECTS THE MEMORY.) I wore a flower in my hair--a red peony. He reached out his hand and touched it. I remember how my cheeks burned and my mouth grew dry-- (FIGHTING BACK THE RUSH OF TEARS.) I tried to be the wife he wanted--a samurai's wife. The clothes I wore, he chose. I learned to walk, to talk, to hold the rice bowl as he wished. I lay at his side at night afraid to sleep so that I shouldn't waken and find it all a dream. (HER LIPS TREMBLE.) A dream-- (SHE PUTS HER HANDS TO HER FACE, SOBBING. FINALLY, AS IF BY THE URGING OF THE MAGISTRATE, SHE GETS CONTROL OF HERSELF.) . . . I know, Your Excellency. And I'll try to talk calmly. I'll try to remember it all--as it happened. (SHE CONTINUES STRAINEDLY.) When the bandit had-- finished with me, he strutted about like a peacock, describing his many conquests, comparing me to the others in low, vile language. (SHAKING HER HEAD.) For my husband, how terrible it must have been--bound, helpless. Even now, I can still hear the bandit's laughter--

(SHE PULLS HERSELF TO HER FEET, HER HANDS GOING TO HER EARS TO SHUT OUT THE SOUND AS TAJOMARU'S LAUGHTER IS HEARD FROM THE DARKNESS. SHE MOVES BACKWARD TOWARD THE CLEARING, AS THE LIGHTS CHANGE FROM THE COURT TO THE FOREST.)

(FALLING TO HER KNEES AT THE EDGE OF THE CLEARING.) I can still hear his hateful words--

(THE HUSBAND SITS, TIED TO THE TREE STUMP--HIS FACE TENSE AND PALE, HIS EYES TIGHTLY SHUT. TAJOMARU IS LEANING AGAINST A TREE SL., GULPING WINE FROM A SMALL GOATSKIN. HE HAS EVIDENTLY HAD ENOUGH TO BE BOISTEROUS--AND DANGEROUS. AS HE DRINKS, SOME OF WINE SPILLS DOWN HIS BARE CHEST AND SPATTERS HIS GARMENT. HE WIPES HIS MOUTH WITH A FOREARM, TAKING A FEW STEPS IN THE DIRECTION OF THE WIFE. SEE FIGURE 5.)

#### TAJOMARU

Ey--you! Know who I am? Tajomaru! (BELLOWING, AS SHE DOESN'T REACT.) Don't you have ears? I said--Tajomaru! Where do you come from that you haven't heard of Tajomaru? (HE GLARES AT HER, THEN LETS OUT A SHORT, HARD LAUGH.) Well, you've heard of him now. (HE RAISES THE GOATSKIN POUCH TO HIS LIPS AGAIN. IT'S EMPTY. ANNOYED, HE TOSSES IT ASIDE AND PULLS A PEACH OUT FROM A FOLD OF HIS GARMENT.) You can boast about it when you're an old hag-- (HE BITES INTO THE FRUIT NOISILY.) --That you were once raped by the famous Tajomaru, the fisherman's son who owns the forest! (THE MOUTHFUL OF PEACH IS ROTTEN. HE GRIMACES AND SPITS IT OUT. HE CROSSES DOWN TO THE EDGE OF THE CLEARING, AND BENDS TO SEE THE WIFE.) And don't look so--outraged. In your whole life it may be the only thing you'll ever remember. (WIPING HIS STICKY HAND ON HIS GARMENT, HE TURNS AND CROSSES TO THE HUSBAND--NUDGES HIM WITH HIS FOOT, DISDAINFULLY.) You like swords, eh? With gold handles. And jewels--red, green. Your fat tongue hung out, didn't it? (SCOWLING DARKLY.) Well, Tajomaru always keeps a promise. Here's a sword for you! (HE RAISES HIS SWORD AS IF TO KILL HIM WITH ONE BLOW.)

#### WIFE

(SUDDENLY SCREAMING.) No! (SHE SPRINGS UP AND RUNS WILDLY TOWARD TAJOMARU. HE TURNS, DIRECTING HIS SWORD TOWARD HER. SHE STOPS, AS CLOSE TO HIM AS SHE DARES. THEIR EYES HOLD FOR A MOMENT.)

#### TAJOMARU

Why not? (WITH BRUTISH HUMOR.) I'll only do you a favor by killing him.



FIGURE 5

WIFE

(FULL OF LOATHING.) You--animal! (THE SMILE FADES FROM TAJOMARU'S FACE. IN SWIFT ANGER, HE EXTENDS THE SWORD MENACINGLY TOWARD THE WIFE'S THROAT AS SHE STANDS FACING HIM. THERE'S A LONG, DANGEROUS MOMENT. THEN, SLOWLY, HIS ARM RELAXES, THE SWORD LOWERING.)

TAJOMARU

Yes, I am an animal. (WITH THE POINT OF HIS SWORD, HE LIFTS THE HEM OF HER ROBE A FEW INCHES AND LETS IT FALL, CONTEMPTUOUSLY.) A pity you're not. (THEN, WITHOUT WARNING, HE TURNS AND GOES OFF SR. FOR A LONG PAUSE, THE WIFE STANDS THERE, ALMOST UNABLE TO BELIEVE IT.)

WIFE

He's gone-- (SHE RUNS QUICKLY TO HER HUSBAND, DROPPING TO HER KNEES AND UNTIES HIM.) He's gone--and we're still alive! (SUDDENLY, SHE IS OVERCOME BY HYSTERICAL SOBS AND LAUGHTER, AND IT IS WITH-DIFFICULTY THAT SHE COLLECTS HERSELF ENOUGH TO UNTIE HIS BONDS.) Forgive me--it's only because I'm so grateful-- (SHE TAKES ONE OF HIS HANDS IN HERS, RAISING IT TENDERLY TO HER CHEEK.) I watched your hands cutting against the rope till the blood came. How horrible it must have been for you, my husband. But I want you to know-- (LEANING AGAINST HIS SHOULDER.) --he couldn't hurt me--all his coarseness, all his brutality--because I thought only about our life together. He couldn't touch that. (HER ARMS CREEP ABOUT HIS NECK.) I'll forget it, my love. I promise you, and we'll go on as we-- (HE SHOULDERS HER OFF. SHE STARES AT HIM, THEN BACKS AWAY.) Why do you look at me like that? (HE DOESN'T ANSWER OR MOVE--JUST LOOKS AT HER WITH COLD, SILENT CONTEMPT.) Your eyes-- (BACKING FARTHER AWAY.) What is that I see in them? (SHAKING HER HEAD IN GROWING HORROR.) No--you can't mean it! (COVERING HER FACE WITH HER HANDS.) I won't look! I won't! (SHE STARTS TO CRY. THE HUSBAND SITS, MOTIONLESS, UNMOVED, STARING AT HER. SUDDENLY SHE LOOKS AROUND, PICKS UP THE DAGGER AND HOLDS THE HANDLE OUT TO HIM.) Here--take it and kill me! If that's how you feel, kill me! (ANGUISHED.) Kill me! But don't look at me with such--contempt-- (HE SITS, HIS EXPRESSION UNCHANGING, NOT TAKING THE DAGGER FROM HER HAND. SLOWLY HER ARM DROPS.) Not even that. You are cruel. (SHE TURNS AWAY, THEN TURNS TO LOOK BACK AT HIM, HELPLESS, BEWILDERED.) I never knew any man but you--I never wanted one. I didn't ask for this to happen to me-- (AS HE REMAINS SILENT.) What do you want me to do? Go away and never see you again? Where would I

go? What would I do--without you? (SUDDENLY HER PRIDE REBELS.) Answer me. Am I so low that you can't throw me a word--like a bone to your dog? (HIS SILENCE LIGHTS THE FUSE OF HER TEMPER.) Answer me! (SHE MOVES TOWARD HIM WITH RISING ANGER.) I am no longer the daughter of a maidservant in your house. I am your wife! I've shared your table and your bed! Answer me! (HIS EYES CONTINUE TO DESPISE HER. SHE RAISES THE DAGGER.) Answer me! (HYSTERICALLY.) Answer me! Answer me--!

(THE LIGHTS BLACK OUT, AND WE HEAR THE SOUND OF HER SOBBING IN THE DARKNESS. WHEN THE LIGHTS COME UP ON THE POLICE COURT, SHE IS MOVING DAZEDLY INTO ITS LIGHT. SHE SINKS TO HER KNEES, HER BODY SAGGING FORWARD EMPTYLY. THE MOTHER LOOKS AT HER DAUGHTER WITH AN UNDERSTANDING AND COMPASSION. THEN--AWKWARDLY, TENTATIVELY--SHE PUTS OUT A HAND TO COMFORT HER. AT THE TOUCH, THE WIFE'S HEAD FALLS FORWARD INTO HER MOTHER'S LAP. THE MOTHER SITS FOR A LONG MOMENT, HER EYES MOIST, GRATEFULLY STROKING HER DAUGHTER'S HAIR. AFTER A MOMENT, SHE LOOKS UP AT THE MAGISTRATE AS IF IN ANSWER TO SOMETHING HE HAS SAID.)

MOTHER

What, Your Excellency? . . . Yes--yes, I'll ask her. (TO HER DAUGHTER, GENTLY.) Kinume, the Court wishes to know if you have anything more to tell.

WIFE

(RAISING HER HEAD, DULLY.) What else is there? (THEN, TRYING.) I must have fainted. When I came to, I found my husband dead. (LOWERING HER ANGUISHED FACE.) It was then I knew I had killed him. I ran into the woods, deeper and deeper. I tried to drown the sight of myself in the river. But even the river scorned me. (SHE LOOKS UP AT THE MAGISTRATE IN POIGNANT APPEAL.) I can't be that worthless, can I? (THE LIGHTS SLOWLY FADE OUT.) Can I?

ACT TWO

MUSIC. "INTERLUDE".

THE TIME IS IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE END OF ACT ONE. AS THE MUSIC FADES INTO RAIN, THE LIGHTS SLOWLY COME UP ON THE RASHOMON GATE. THE PRIEST, THE WOODCUTTER AND THE WIGMAKER ARE IN THE SAME POSITIONS IN WHICH THEY WERE LAST SEEN.

WIGMAKER

(MIMICKING THE LAST WORDS AND TONE OF THE WIFE.) I can't be that worthless, can I? Can I?

PRIEST

Her face--It's so hard to forget.

WIGMAKER

Aah--! (A GESTURE OF DISMISSAL.) So--her lips trembled, she cried. Tears are always women's weapon against men. And we idiots believe them every time.

PRIEST

But why? Why should she confess to a crime she didn't commit?

WIGMAKER

Who knows why women do things? Their minds work in devious ways. To win sympathy, maybe. See how your heart bleeds for her? She confesses to a murder, but--you can't forget her face. It's so pale and tearful and honest. And honesty is such a virtue--how can you think of hanging a virtuous woman?

WOODCUTTER

(STANDS UP. TO THE PRIEST, WHO HAS TURNED AWAY.) Don't let him hurt you. He's--he's only baiting you.

PRIEST

(TURNS TO THE WOODCUTTER.) What does it matter? (WEARILY.)

Some of what he says is true. How can we believe the wife's story--since we heard the medium?

WIGMAKER

(STARES AT THEM FOR A MOMENT.) The medium?

WOODCUTTER

(TURNS AND SLOWLY SITS DOWN ON THE BOTTOM STEP OF THE GATE.) They brought a medium to the court.

PRIEST

To evoke the spirit of the murdered man.

WIGMAKER

So the husband spoke from the dead! (EAGERLY.) What did he say? (HE LOOKS AT THE PRIEST, WHO DOESN'T ANSWER--THEN AT THE WOODCUTTER, WHO LOOKS AWAY.) Was it so different, then, from what the others said?

PRIEST

(HALF TO HIMSELF.) The wife's anguish--how could that be false? (SHAKING HIS HEAD.) And Tajomaru, so contemptuous of the rope. Why should he lie--a man who's condemned to die?

(IN THE DARKNESS A SOUND, THE SOUND OF RATTLE-LIKE BELLS BEING SWUNG IN A WEIRD RHYTHM.)

WIGMAKER

(COMING UP TOWARD THE PRIEST, WITH MALEVOLENT PERSISTENCE.) What did he say? What did he say?

(THE LIGHTS HAVE STARTED TO DIM DOWN ON THE RASHOMON GATE AND COME UP ON THE POLICE COURT. THE MEDIUM HOLDS A DIVINING-STICK WITH A CLUSTER OF RATTLE-LIKE BELLS AT THE END OF IT WHICH SHE SWINGS WITH WILD FERVOR. SWAYING, WRITHING, SHE STRUGGLES TO ESTABLISH CONTACT WITH THE DEAD MAN. WHEN SHE DOES, THE BELL DROPS FROM HER HAND AND SHE FALLS TO THE FLOOR. THE HUSBAND'S SOUL-VOICE, HOLLOWLY SONOROUS IN ITS

PASSAGE FROM THE WORLD BEYOND, IS HEARD AS THOUGH EMANATING FROM HER TORTURED MOUTH, THOUGH THE LIPS ONLY OPEN AND CLOSE EMPTYLY.)

#### HUSBAND'S SOUL-VOICE

I'm in the dark now--in the empty, whirling pit of darkness. Curses upon you! Curses upon you who threw me into this black inferno--! (THE MEDIUM GASPS FOR BREATH, THEN FINDS IT, AS THE VOICE CONTINUES.) I will tell you--I want you all to know--how it came to be. (THE MEDIUM SWAYS IN HER TRANCE.) The bandit, after attacking my wife, sat beside her--on the dry bamboo leaves--he spoke to her with a serpent's tongue--like a man who knows of women. And every once in a while--he touched her.

(THE LIGHTS HAVE FADED OUT ON THE COURT, AND BEGIN TO COME UP ON THE FOREST. THERE, THE BOUND HUSBAND SITS, HIS SOUL-VOICE STILL COMING FROM THE DIRECTION OF THE MEDIUM. THE WIFE IS HALF-SITTING, HALF-LYING ON THE EDGE OF THE CENTER CLEARING. TAJOMARU IS HALF-KNEELING ON THE LEFT SIDE OF HER.)

#### TAJOMARU

(HIS HAND MOVES TO THE WOMAN'S HAIR. HUSKILY.) It shines, your hair, like the river under the summer moon. I sleep there sometimes, when it's hot--the river bank still warm from the day's sun--so warm your body needs no clothing. And the heavy scent of the night-flowers makes your dreams wild, and you wake up, trembling with desire-- (THE WIFE SITS MOTIONLESS, GIVING NO INDICATION THAT SHE HEARS HIM.) But what do you know of things like that, locked in a bamboo box in the city, tied to a man of--silk? (HE MOVES TOWARD THE HUSBAND CONTEMPTUOUSLY.) The samurai warrior! The proud blood of his ancestors has thinned to water with too much easy living. Can those fine hands bruise your skin when they hold you? Or that careful mouth--can it conquer yours? (HE SNORTS, COMING BACK TO HER.) Such men are made for women who have ice in their loins. (HALF-KNEELING ON THE RIGHT SIDE OF THE WIFE.) But you are not such a woman. That's what I guessed when the breeze blew and I first saw your face--the cool skin denied by those lips, full and promising. And now that I've--tasted them-- (THE WIFE RAISES HER HEAD. FACE FLUSHED, LIPS PARTED, SHE LOOKS AT TAJOMARU.)

HUSBAND'S SOUL-VOICE

My wife--my loving and gentle and dutiful wife--never in all our married life did I see her face like that. Never--never--!

(WITH A BREATHLESS SIGH, THE WIFE PUTS HER HAND AGAINST TAJOMARU'S BARE CHEST, THEN HER LIPS--SLOWLY MOVING THEM UP TO MEET HIS MOUTH. HE PULLS HER INTO HIS ARMS AND THEY EMBRACE FEVERISHLY, PASSIONATELY. THE HUSBAND CLOSSES HIS EYES AGAINST THE SIGHT. SEE FIGURE 6.)

WIFE

(BREATHLESSLY.) Take me! Take me away with you! (TAJOMARU SMILES EXULTANTLY. HE GETS TO HIS FEET, LIFTING HER UP IN HIS ARMS, AND STARTS TO CARRY HER OFF TO SL.) Wait! (HE STOPS, LOOKING DOWN AT HER WONDERINGLY. SHE TURNS AND LOOKS BACK AT THE HUSBAND, HER EYES NARROWING.) As long as he lives I'll always be his wife. I can never be completely yours. (COLDLY.) Kill him. (THERE'S A MOMENT AS TAJOMARU JUST LOOKS AT HER. THEN, SLOWLY, HE DROPS HER TO HER FEET. SHE POINTS TOWARD HER HUSBAND WITH MOUNTING VIOLENCE.) Kill him! Kill him!

HUSBAND'S SOUL-VOICE

Those words still roar around me like a storm, blowing me deeper and deeper into this bottomless pit. Have such cursed, such foul words ever been uttered out of a human mouth? Even the bandit--this wild beast of the forest--even he shuddered. (TAJOMARU STARES AT THE WIFE AS SHE TURNS AND MOVES BACK TOWARD HIM.) He looked at her, and something happened in his face--some dim stirring, some deep revulsion against the female animal who feeds on her mate.

(SUDDENLY TAJOMARU GRABS HER BY THE THROAT AND THROWS HER TO THE GROUND. SHE TRIES TO CRAWL AWAY, BUT HE STANDS ASTRIDE HER.)

TAJOMARU

(TO THE HUSBAND.) What do you want me to do with her? Cut her black heart out? Or spare her? (AS THE WIFE STRUGGLES, HE PUTS HIS FOOT ON HER BACK, STOPPING HER.) Whatever you say--I'll do it-- (THE HUSBAND TURNS HIS FACE AWAY, MOVED BY TAJOMARU'S UNEXPECTED SENSITIVITY. TAJOMARU TAKES HIS FOOT OFF THE WIFE AND COMES TOWARD THE HUSBAND.) Come, tell me. It's up to you. (THE WIFE SCRAMBLES TO HER FEET AND RUNS



FIGURE 6

FOR HER LIFE, OFF SL. TAJOMARU WHEELS AND STARTS AFTER HER-- BUT HE STOPS ABRUPTLY AT THE EDGE OF THE CLEARING AS HER SCREAMS ARE HEARD DISAPPEARING THROUGH THE WOODS. TURNING BACK.) Let her go. Her screams will bring someone from the road. (WITH SUDDEN DECISION.) The devil take both of you-- I'd better look out for myself. (HE STARTS TO GO OFF IN THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION FROM THE WIFE, BUT STOPS, LOOKING BACK AT THE HUSBAND. QUICKLY, HE CROSSES TO HIM AND CUTS HIS BONDS.) We're both better off without her. (HE EXITS SR.)

(THE HUSBAND'S ARMS SINK TO HIS SIDES. HE SITS THERE ALONE, MOTIONLESS.)

#### HUSBAND'S SOUL-VOICE

It was quiet--for a long time. Then I heard someone sobbing. Someone sobbing--who could it be? (THE HUSBAND'S EYES ARE FILLED WITH TEARS. SUDDENLY HE BENDS FORWARD, HIDING HIS FACE, RACKED WITH QUIET SOBBING--A MAN WHOSE LIFE, WHOSE HOPES, WHOSE PRIDE ARE GONE. RISING FINALLY, HE MOVES ABOUT BLINDLY, FIGHTING TO REGAIN THE CONTROL WHICH IS THE RULE OF HIS LIFE. WHEN HE FINALLY RAISES HIS HEAD, HIS FACE IS AGAIN IMPASSIVE, INSCRUTABLE. HE DRAWS HIS SWORD, LOOKS AT IT WITH SILENT RESOLUTION. THEN HE KNEELS DOWN ON THE CENTER OF THE CLEARING, AND COMMITS HARA-KIRI. THE LIGHTS ON THE FOREST BLACK OUT.)

(SIMULTANEOUSLY, THE LIGHTS COME UP ON THE POLICE COURT AS THE MEDIUM SCREAMS CONVULSIVELY AND, WITH A MOTION AS IF THRUSTING A SWORD INTO HERSELF, PITCHES FORWARD ON HER FACE.)

#### HUSBAND'S SOUL-VOICE

A lump rose to my mouth, but I felt no pain. Only a coldness creeping along my fingers--and a thin mist gathering around me. Everything was silent. Not a single bird-note in the sky, not a leaf moving. Only a lonely light lingered in the grove and on the mountain. In the stillness, I lay quietly. By and by the light grew fainter, till the bamboo and cedars were lost to view. Then someone seemed to approach softly. Who? I tried to see--but the darkness was too heavy. Someone--that someone's hand--grasped the sword in my breast and drew it out slowly. The lump in my mouth rose up to end my breath--and I sank down, down into the blackness of space.

WOODCUTTER'S VOICE

(IN THE DARKNESS, VIOLENTLY.) It's a lie! A lie!

(THE LIGHTS ON THE COURT BLACK OUT. THERE IS A CRASH OF THUNDER AS THE LIGHTS COME UP QUICKLY ON THE RASHOMON GATE, REVEALING THE PRIEST AND THE WIGMAKER STARING AT THE WOODCUTTER, WHO HAS SPRUNG TO HIS FEET.)

WOODCUTTER

His whole story is a lie! He didn't kill himself! He was-- (HE STOPS AS HE REALIZES WHAT HE'S SAYING.)

WIGMAKER

(RISING.) He was--what? (AS THE WOODCUTTER TURNS AWAY, MOPPING HIS BROW NERVOUSLY.) Why are you sweating so? (THE WOODCUTTER STOPS MOPPING ABRUPTLY.) Could it be that you have some little morsel you're not sharing with us?

WOODCUTTER

No, I--I don't know anything. (THE PRIEST GETS SLOWLY TO HIS FEET, HIS EYES NEVER LEAVING THE WOODCUTTER. HE MEETS THE PRIEST'S SEARCHING EYES, AVOIDS THEM QUICKLY.)

WIGMAKER

(CROSSES DOWN TO THE WOODCUTTER. GRINNING.) Just that a dead man lied. Only that.

WOODCUTTER

I don't know--maybe he didn't lie-- (HE STARTS AWAY TO THE DIRECTION OF GATE LEFT.)

PRIEST

(TO THE WOODCUTTER.) It is you who are lying.

WOODCUTTER

(STOPPING AND TURNING BACK.) I swear--

PRIEST

You swear too easily. Now--and in the Court today. (ONE STEP DOWN TOWARD THE WOODCUTTER.) But you did not find a dead man--you saw him alive--and the bandit and the woman--

WIGMAKER

(DELIGHTED.) He must have seen the whole thing!

PRIEST

(CROSSING TO THE WOODCUTTER.) Why? Why didn't you tell them at the Court yesterday? (THE WOODCUTTER MEETS THE PRIEST'S RELENTLESS GAZE. THEN, SLOWLY, HIS SHOULDERS SAG, HIS LIPS TREMBLE.)

WOODCUTTER

I'm--a poor man--

PRIEST

Is truth a luxury for the rich?

WOODCUTTER

I--I didn't want to get involved.

PRIEST

Involved? But you are involved! If not by your conscience or love of truth, then out of pure selfishness. Every time justice blunders, it is you who cries out for mercy, who rots in every jail, who hangs on every rope! What kind of fool are you that could unravel this whole web of dishonor and deceit, and did not speak out? Whatever their motives, one of those three--at least one of them--was telling the truth!

(THERE IS A LOW RUMBLE OF THUNDER.)

WOODCUTTER

(MOVING AWAY FROM HIM.) No-- (HE COMES FACE TO FACE WITH THE WIGMAKER.)

WIGMAKER

No? (THE WOODCUTTER TURNS AWAY FROM HIM.)

PRIEST

(STARING AT HIM.) What do you mean?

WOODCUTTER

(HE TURNS, PAINED, RELUCTANT.) None of their stories was true. They lied--all of them.

(THE PRIEST STANDS LOOKING AT HIM, STUNNED. THE WIGMAKER LOOKS FROM ONE TO THE OTHER, THEN SLOWLY BURSTS INTO MOUNTAINING SARDONIC LAUGHTER. THE WOODCUTTER STANDS, APOLOGETIC, MISERABLE.)

WIGMAKER

Oh, my poor sight! That's one of the best jokes that's been played on me since my mother bore me. (THE PRIEST TURNS AND CROSSES BACK TO GATE LEFT AWAY FROM THEM BOTH.) The way he sat there all this time with a face as blank as the moon's--

WOODCUTTER

I told you--I--didn't want to get-- (HE BREAKS OFF GUILTILY, GLANCING TOWARD THE PRIEST.)

WIGMAKER

Say it. You didn't want to get involved.

WOODCUTTER

(SLOWLY SINKS DOWN ON THE BOTTOM STEP OF THE GATE.) I was wrong.

WIGMAKER

(CROSSES TO THE WOODCUTTER.) Why? Your first thought was

for your own skin--nothing wrong with that. (BENDS TOWARD HIM.) As for justice, it'll blunder no matter what you do. So just trust your own good sense and keep out of its way.

PRIEST

(TURNING.) Leave him alone!

WIGMAKER

What are you offering him that's any better? (CROSSES UP TO THE PRIEST.) Have you ever rotted in one of those prisons--or felt the cold point of the policeman's sword at your throat? Yes, courage is an easy word--in the sanctuary of the Temple garden.

PRIEST

I want no sanctuary!

WIGMAKER

What do you want? (AS THE PRIEST LOOKS AT HIM, AT A LOSS.) You can't even look at the dirty face of the world you live in without wanting to run from it. Or accept the familiar fact that three people told lies in a Police Court yesterday. (WITH MOCK SYMPATHY, AS THE PRIEST TURNS AWAY.) I know--it's not pleasant, when you're sleeping, to have the pillow kicked from under your head. (CROSSING BACK TO GATE RIGHT.)

PRIEST

(TURNING BACK TO THE WIGMAKER.) There must have been some reason--

WIGMAKER

(HE STOPS AND TURNS.) But it's so simple. Everyone tells what he wants the world to believe.

PRIEST

No. There must be a better answer.

WIGMAKER

(SHAKING HIS HEAD.) Still hoping for some heavenly hocus-pocus to turn the stink into incense. (SLOWLY SITS DOWN BESIDE THE FIRE.) You were running away, holy man. Well, keep running, I tell you. Don't wait for the miracle.

PRIEST

(THERE IS A MOMENT, HE STARES AT THE WIGMAKER PENETRATINGLY.) Maybe the miracle is here--now. (AS THE WIGMAKER LOOKS AT HIM BLANKLY.) Maybe it's you.

WIGMAKER

Me?

PRIEST

(TWO STEPS TOWARD THE WIGMAKER.) The rain--holding us here at the Rashomon Gate. Having to tell again--to you--the whole horrible tale. And out of your contempt and mockery, uncovering the truth-- (LOOKING TOWARD THE WOODCUTTER.) --at last.

(THE WIGMAKER FOLLOWS HIS GAZE TO THE FORLORN FIGURE OF THE WOODCUTTER WHO DOESN'T MEET THEIR EYES.)

WIGMAKER

(TO THE WOODCUTTER.) At last! The divine mouthpiece! (HE LAUGHS SARDONICALLY.) This is your moment, my friend. The hand of Buddha guides your lips!

WOODCUTTER

No, I--

WIGMAKER

(LEANS TOWARD HIM WITH MOCK SEVERITY.) Speak up! One doesn't turn his back on Heaven's bidding.

(THE WOODCUTTER LOOKS OVER AT THE PRIEST HELPLESSLY.)

PRIEST

(A STEP DOWN TOWARD THE WOODCUTTER. GENTLY.) Never be afraid to speak the truth.

WOODCUTTER

(THERE'S A LONG MOMENT AS HE WETS HIS LIPS. THEN HE NODS.) All right--I'll tell you.

WIGMAKER

Aaah-- (HE SETTLES HIMSELF FOR THE TALE.)

WOODCUTTER

(TAKING A DEEP BREATH.) I was going through the woods, and-- I found this woman's traveling hat-- (THE PRIEST CROSSES BACK TO GATE LEFT AND SLOWLY SITS DOWN.)

WIGMAKER

A sedge hat with a veil--we know. And then--?

WOODCUTTER

And then--I heard sounds. So I stole up closer and peered out from behind a bush. The husband was still alive. He was tied to a tree stump.

WIGMAKER

And the wife?

WOODCUTTER

She was-- (APOLOGETICALLY.) fixing her hair.

WIGMAKER

(INCREDULOUSLY.) Fixing her hair? (TO THE PRIEST, AFTER A MOMENT'S REFLECTION.) Of course. What else would a woman be doing? (TURNING BACK TO THE WOODCUTTER.) And Tajomaru--?

WOODCUTTER

He was--on his knees.

WIGMAKER

On his knees? (AS THE WOODCUTTER NODS.) Oh, I'm going to like this story! Tajomaru the Terrible on his knees--!

(THE WIGMAKER LAUGHS, RELISHING IT. AS HE DOES, THE LIGHTS FADE OUT ON THE RASHOMON GATE AND COME UP ON THE FOREST, REVEALING THE TABLEAU OF TAJOMARU KNEELING ON THE LEFT SIDE OF THE WIFE, LOOKING ON HELPLESSLY AS SHE SITS ON THE GROUND COMBING AND ARRANGING HER MUSSED HAIRDO. HER FACE IS AVERTED FROM HIM IN WORDLESS PIQUE. THE HUSBAND IS BOUND AND GAGGED AT THE TREE STUMP.)

TAJOMARU

Please-- (HE REACHES OUT TO TOUCH HER--THINKS BETTER OF IT.) I'm sorry. (WHEN SHE JUST GOES ON FIXING HER HAIR, HE MOVES AROUND ON HIS KNEES TO THE RIGHT SIDE OF HER, TRYING TO FACE HER.) How many times can I say it? I'm sorry, I'm sorry. (SHE TURNS HER FACE AWAY FROM HIM, LEAVING HIM STARING AT THE BACK OF HER HEAD AGAIN.) Can't you understand? All my life--in here-- (TAPS HIMSELF ON THE TEMPLE.) --I've carried around someone like you. When I was a boy, I used to stare at the great ladies passing in their carriage-chairs. Once, one of them dropped her fan and I picked it up for her. Her hand was like a toy--with polished nails that curved--like yours-- (HE TOUCHES HER HAND REVERENTLY. SHE PULLS IT AWAY.) Look--I, Tajomaru, known and feared throughout half the country--I'm on my knees, I'm begging you. Please come away with me.

WIFE

Leave me alone.

TAJOMARU

(AS SHE CONTINUES FIXING HER HAIR, HE SPRINGS TO HIS FEET, FRUSTRATEDLY.) What is it? That I'm a bandit? All right--I give it up. I promise. And I always keep a promise. Ask any beggar or thief and they'll tell you--Tajomaru always keeps a promise.

WIFE

(DISINTERESTED.) Go away.

TAJOMARU

(GETTING MORE DESPERATE, HE SQUATS DOWN ON THE LEFT SIDE OF HER.) Is it money? I've got piles of it, hidden away in places all over the forest. Just come with me and I'll show you things to make your mouth water--silks, jade, ivories, jewels--! (SHE HAS STOPPED FIXING HER HAIR AND IS LISTENING.) Remember three years ago when Lord Uji's daughter disappeared on the highway with all her dowry? (HER HEAD TURNS SLOWLY.) There's one emerald as big as my fist. (HE HOLDS OUT HIS FIST--SHE STARES AT IT, EYES WIDE AS SAUCERS, MESMERIZED.) I can just see how it would look, there, in the hollow of your neck-- (THE "EMERALD" IS MOVING TOWARD THE HOLLOW OF HER NECK. ALMOST THERE, IT SUDDENLY BECOMES A FIST AGAIN.)

WIFE

(SHRINKING AWAY.) Don't touch me!

TAJOMARU

(HE IS BEWILDERED. THEN, HE CLAPS HIMSELF ON THE FOREHEAD.) What an idiot! How could I expect a lady like you to dirty herself with stolen money and jewels. (HE PACES BACK AND FORTH, THE NEXT DECISION FACING HIM SQUARELY. HE STRUGGLES AGAINST IT--FINALLY SUBMITS TO THE INEVITABLE.) All right, then, if that's what it has to be, I'll do it. I'll go to work! (KNEELING AGAIN ON THE LEFT SIDE OF HER, EAGERLY.) Yes, I'll get a cart and pull it through the streets. I'll sweat, I'll grow calluses--but I'll make you happy, if you'll be my woman.

WIFE

(SHE LOOKS AT HIM DISDAINFULLY. RISING, SHE ARRANGES THE FOLDS OF HER KIMONO.) How can you even suggest anything like that?

TAJOMARU

How? (HE MOVES TO HER ON HIS KNEES.) Because I want you so much, I-- (HE CLIMBS UP HER AS SHE TRIES TO FEND HIM OFF.) Let me kiss you again--let me show you--!

WIFE

(STRUGGLING AGAINST HIS LIPS.) No--don't--stop it--!  
 (SUDDENLY SHE GIVES HIM AN UNLADYLIKE SHOVE. HE STUMBLES  
 BACK, HIS HAND WHICH WAS HOLDING HER KIMONO ACCIDENTALLY  
 RIPPING IT. SHE STARES AT THE UGLY RENT, HORRIFIED.) My  
 kimono!

TAJOMARU

(WITH STRAINED PATIENCE.) I'll get you a new one--

WIFE

Look what you've done!

TAJOMARU

I'll get you ten kimonos!

WIFE

Only the second time I've worn it--

TAJOMARU

(BURSTING.) Hell take your kimono! (AS SHE LOOKS AT HIM,  
 STARTLED.) Yes, that's what I said--hell take it! And hell  
 take you! (TAKING A STEP TOWARD HER.) I'll beat you--I'll  
 kill you--if you don't do what I say!

WIFE

You wouldn't dare! (THEN, HOPEFULLY.) Would you? (HE  
 DRAWS HIS SWORD MENACINGLY. THE WIFE LOOKS AT HIM FOR A  
 MOMENT. THEN, WITH A FEMALE, PROVOCATIVE VOICE.) What  
 you're asking is unreasonable. How can I do what you say?

TAJOMARU

Huh?

WIFE

A wife's duty is to her husband.

TAJOMARU

Oh. (AN IDEA FORMS. HE CROSSES TO THE HUSBAND.) All right, then I'll kill him. (THE HUSBAND WRIGGLES AND GURGLES IN PROTEST.)

WIFE

(RUNS IN BETWEEN.) No--don't!

TAJOMARU

(STOPS. FACING THE WIFE.) It's the easiest way.

WIFE

A lady isn't won by "the easiest way". She only prizes a man who's ready to fight for her.

TAJOMARU

(IT HAD NEVER OCCURRED TO HIM.) Fight? You mean--duel? (ABRUPTLY, THE WIFE RUNS TO HER HUSBAND AND CUTS HIS BONDS WITH HER DAGGER.) Wait--don't! What are you doing? (APPREHENSIVELY.) I don't want to play fancy games with a samurai.

WIFE

(STEPPING BACK, A NOTE OF ANTICIPATION IN HER VOICE.) Now--it's up to both of you.

(SHE WATCHES EXPECTANTLY AS HER HUSBAND REMOVES THE ROPE FROM AROUND HIM AND THE GAG FROM HIS MOUTH. TAJOMARU TAKES A DEFENSIVE GRIP ON HIS SWORD HANDLE, BACKING AWAY WEARILY.)

HUSBAND

(RISING, ADJUSTING AND BRUSHING OFF HIS ROBE.) You can put that sword away. (AS TAJOMARU GAPES AT HIM.) Don't worry,

I'm not going to cut you down.

TAJOMARU

Cut me down?

HUSBAND

(CROSSING DOWN TO FRONT RIGHT.) I have no intention of engaging in a duel with you. The sword of a samurai is reserved for nobler causes. It is a weapon of honor.

WIFE

What about--my honor?

HUSBAND

(TO HIS WIFE.) You don't even know what the word means.

WIFE

But--I've just been raped!

HUSBAND

(A SNORT OF DISBELIEF.) Ha!

WIFE

(A STEP TOWARD HER HUSBAND.) I struggled--I was overcome--

HUSBAND

(SCATHINGLY.) My dear wife, I may have been gagged, but I wasn't blindfolded.

WIFE

There was nothing I could do!

HUSBAND

(TURNS AWAY.) Naturally--being what you are.

WIFE

(THE VENEER OF THE "LADY" IS DISAPPEARING RAPIDLY. TWO STEPS TOWARD HER HUSBAND.) What do you mean--what I am?

HUSBAND

(HE TURNS BACK AND APPROACHES TO HER.) You just cut my bonds with your dagger. Why didn't you drive it into your throat instead? That's what a woman of true nobility would have done, to wipe out her disgrace.

WIFE

I see. That's what a woman of nobility would have done. But, I, being what I am--

HUSBAND

What you are and what you always will be--a kitchen maid's daughter--a slut! (HE STEPS AWAY AGAIN. TAJOMARU STARES AT HIM, AGHAST.)

WIFE

So that's my reward--for all my faithful devotion!

TAJOMARU

(STUNNED.) Kitchen maid's daughter? (THEY IGNORE HIM COMPLETELY.)

HUSBAND

(A BITTER LAUGH.) Devotion! (TURNS BACK.) Do you think I'm a child? All those smiles at any man who crossed our threshold. You weren't even skillful enough to conceal them behind your fan. And the little sighs in the darkness of our garden--the whispers behind the screens--

WIFE

(INJURED.) What whispers?

HUSBAND

Oh, you can stop playing the lady now. I'm your husband, remember? I know where you came from and what you are. And I've tried all this time to ignore it and, somehow, to save face.

WIFE

(SHRILLY.) Face--face! It's all you ever think about!

HUSBAND

I should have thought about it before I married you.

WIFE

(ONE STEP CLOSER TO THE HUSBAND.) You boor--you snob!

TAJOMARU

(SUDDENLY.) Oh, be quiet, both of you! (THEY STOP AND LOOK AT HIM. HE SURVEYS THEM DISTASTEFULLY.) How did all this start, anyway? (REMEMBERING, RESENTFULLY.) That breeze. I'd still be asleep by the roadside if not for that stinking breeze. (SHEATHING HIS SWORD.) Let's forget the whole thing. (HE STARTS OFF SL, BUT THE WIFE RUNS AFTER HIM.)

WIFE

Wait--don't go! How can we forget it?

TAJOMARU

I've forgotten it already. (HE STARTS TO GO AGAIN, BUT THE WIFE CATCHES HIS ARM.)

WIFE

You can't leave us here like this--you can't!

TAJOMARU

(DISENGAGING HIS ARM.) Stop following me! I hate being followed!

HUSBAND

Leave him alone! Haven't you disgraced yourself enough? (THE TWO MEN START AWAY FROM HER IN OPPOSITE DIRECTIONS. SHE LOOKS HELPLESSLY FROM ONE TO THE OTHER, THEN SINKS TO THE GROUND, SOBBING. THE TWO MEN STOP AND TURN, THEN SLOWLY COME BACK AND STAND LOOKING DOWN AT HER.) Oh, stop that whimpering.

TAJOMARU

Women always cry.

HUSBAND

She's just wasting all those tears on me. Maybe she thinks you can be fooled by--

TAJOMARU

Me? Not anymore.

HUSBAND

It was her face that trapped me. I thought I could make something of her, but--

TAJOMARU

Well--you can always put her back in the kitchen.

WIFE

(SPRINGING TO HER FEET.) Kitchen! (THE EXPLOSIVENESS OF HER ACTION MAKES THE TWO MEN TAKE A BACKWARD STEP.) Kitchen maid's daughter! Yes, that's what I am! But one thing you learn in the kitchen is to recognize the smell of-- (AT BOTH OF THEM.) --garbage!

HUSBAND

Hold your tongue!

WIFE

(TURNING ON HIM.) My dear, gallant husband! All that noble talk about your noble sword! Everyone knows a samurai has the right to destroy anyone for the most trifling offense. And what has this man done to you? Overpowered you, bound and gagged you, violated your wife before your very eyes! And your reply to all this? You draw yourself up and order me to drive the dagger into my throat! (WITH CRUSHING CONTEMPT.) I thought I was giving you one last chance to be a man. But I should have known better. I've lived with you, slept with you, felt your tremble in the night and held your head while you vomited before you rode off to battle in glorious splendor. Yes, we both know why you won't fight. You're a coward-- (SHRILLY.) Coward--coward--coward!

TAJOMARU

(REPELLED BY HER OUTBURST.) That's enough!

WIFE

Enough? (TURNING ON HIM.) Who says enough?

TAJOMARU

Tajomaru!

WIFE

(SHE MEASURES HIM.) Ah, yes--Tajomaru the Terrible-- (MOVING TOWARD HIM.) For years, I thrilled to the tales of your romantic escapades, your daring, your savage strength. (SURPRISED AT THESE WORDS, TAJOMARU BEGINS TO PREEN.) And for a moment, I thought it might be true. I half hoped you were the one who would beat me, fight for me, tear me away from this stupid life I've been living. But no-- (SHE MOVES CLOSER TO HIM.) You were ready enough to murder my husband when he was bound and gagged. But when I untied him your burning passion for me vanished--and you can't wait to vanish after it. You're no better than he is--just a small cheap imitation of yourself, a reputation without a body--a nothing!

(SHE SPITS FULL IN HIS FACE. SLOWLY, DARKLY, TAJOMARU WIPES HIS CHEEK. THEN, ABRUPTLY, HE SHOVES HER ASIDE. GLARING AT HER, HE SLASHES THE AIR FEROCIOUSLY WITH HIS SWORD A FEW TIMES, TESTING THE BLADE. THEN HE WHEELS TOWARD THE HUSBAND. THERE'S AN EXPECTANT MOMENT.)

HUSBAND

(TAKES HIS SWORD OUT.) Vomited, did I!

(TURNING TOWARD TAJOMARU, HE ALSO TESTS THE BLADE OF HIS SWORD, SLASHING THE AIR WITH GREAT STYLE. THE WIFE SMILES WITH TRIUMPHANT SATISFACTION AS THE TWO MEN ASSUME EN GARDE POSITIONS. THE TWO MEN CIRCLE AROUND EACH OTHER WARILY, GOING THROUGH AN ELABORATE SERIES OF FEINTS WITHOUT COMING IN ACTUAL CONTACT. AFTER A WHILE, TAJOMARU STOPS, A BIT WINDED, AND LOWERS HIS SWORD.)

TAJOMARU

Well, why don't you attack?

HUSBAND

Why don't you?

(TAJOMARU WIPES HIS NOSE WITH HIS SLEEVE. THEN SUDDENLY HE TAKES A SINGLE, MIGHTY LEAP TOWARD HIS ADVERSARY, SWINGING A SINGLE, MIGHTY BLOW WHILE ROARING OUT A FIERCE ANIMAL-LIKE SOUND. IT LOOKS VERY IMPRESSIVE BUT ACHIEVES NOTHING SINCE THE HUSBAND SIMULTANEOUSLY TAKES A MIGHTY LEAP BACKWARD. IN RETALIATION, THE HUSBAND ATTACKS WITH A MAGNIFICENT AND HIGHLY SKILLED SET OF FENCING FIGURES. BUT TAJOMARU RETREATS WITHOUT THE LEAST CONCERN FOR GOOD SWORDSMANSHIP OR DIGNITY. AND THEY STILL HAVE NOT MANAGED TO TOUCH EACH OTHER. THE WIFE, WHO HAS RETREATED BEHIND A TREE, HAS BEEN PEERING OUT AT THE PROGRESS OF THE "DUES." AS THE BLOODLESS PANTOMINE CONTINUES, SHE EMERGES SLOWLY FROM HER POSITION OF SAFETY.)

HUSBAND

(NOTICING HER.) Don't stand in the open like that!

TAJOMARU

Get behind a tree! You might get hurt!

WIFE

(SCATHINGLY.) That's more than I can say for either of you!

(SHE MOVES BACK AMONG THE TREES AS THE MEN LOOK AFTER HER SHEEPISHLY. THEN THEY TURN AND SPRING TOWARD EACH OTHER WITH

MORE GENUINE FURY, AND THIS TIME THE FOREST IS FILLED WITH THE CLANGING OF SWORD AGAINST SWORD AS THE CHARACTER OF THE DUEL CHANGES TO ONE OF GRIM REALITY. ABRUPTLY, TAJOMARU SWINGS A WILD BLOW AT THE HUSBAND. THE LATTER JUST MANAGES TO AVOID IT AND AIMS A RETURN SLASH AT TAJOMARU WHICH MISSES BUT CUTS THE SKIN OF HIS LEG. TAJOMARU DEFENDS HIMSELF DESPERATELY. THE HUSBAND, SENSING HIS ADVANTAGE, PASSES THE ATTACK EVEN MORE VIGOROUSLY. WITH A WELL-TIMED BLOW, THE HUSBAND KNOCKS OFF TAJOMARU'S SWORD. TAJOMARU FALLS BACKWARD AND TRIES TO GROVEL AWAY. WITH A TRIUMPHANT SHOUT, THE HUSBAND EXTENDS HIS SWORD TOWARD TAJOMARU'S THROAT.)

HUSBAND

(TRIUMPHANTLY.) Hah!

TAJOMARU

(HOLDING UP A HAND, AS THE HUSBAND ADVANCES ON HIM.) Wait--give me a chance-- (BUT THE HUSBAND ADVANCES RELENTLESSLY. TAJOMARU BACKS AWAY TOWARD THE TREE ON CR.) You can't kill an unarmed man--you can't! (THE HUSBAND COMES TOWARD HIM, SWORD HELD READY FOR THE FINAL THRUST. SEE FIGURE 7. FRANTICALLY, TAJOMARU PICKS UP A HANDFUL OF DIRT AND THROWS IT AT THE HUSBAND, WHO STUMBLES BLINDLY BACKWARD INTO THE BUSHES. THERE'S A CHILLING CRY FROM THE HUSBAND AS HE FALLS. TAJOMARU GETS UP AND TURNS TO DEFEND HIMSELF. THE WIFE, WHO HAS BEEN FOLLOWING PROGRESS OF THE ENCOUNTER FROM VARIOUS POINTS, WATCHES WITH TENSE EXPECTANCY AS THE BUSHES SLOWLY PART AND THE HUSBAND STAGGERS INTO MOMENTARY VIEW. HIS SWORD IS IMPALED DEEPLY IN HIS BREAST. THE WIFE GASPS.)

HUSBAND

I--I fell-- (HE FALLS FORWARD INTO THE BUSHES, OUT OF SIGHT.)

(SLOWLY, THE WIFE MOVES OVER TO WHERE SHE CAN LOOK DOWN AT THE BODY OF HER HUSBAND. THEN SHE TURNS HER EYES TOWARD TAJOMARU. EXHAUSTED, UNABLE TO SPEAK, HE DROPS HIS SWORD AND STARTS TO STAGGER TOWARD HIS PRIZE, ARMS OUTSTRETCHED. SHE BACKS AWAY FROM HIM WITH A SOUND OF HORROR AND DISGUST--TURNS AND RUNS OFF SL. TAJOMARU TRIES TO FOLLOW, BUT AFTER A FEW STEPS HE SINKS TO HIS KNEES--STARES DUMBLY OFF IN THE DIRECTION IN WHICH THE WIFE DISAPPEARED.)

(THE LIGHTS FADE OUT ON THE FOREST AND COME UP ON THE RASHOMON GATE. THERE, THE RAIN HAS STOPPED, BUT THE FIRE IS STILL BURNING FITFULLY. THE WIGMAKER IS LISTENING ATTENTIVELY AS THE WOODCUTTER FINISHES THE STORY. THE PRIEST, HIS HEAD, BOWED, SITS FACING AWAY FROM THEM BOTH.)



FIGURE 7

WOODCUTTER

. . . I held my breath, hiding there behind the bush, afraid Tajomaru might hear. But then, when I thought I'd burst, he got up. He picked up his sword. And then--I still get chills when I think of it--he passed by me so close I could have touched him. I didn't move a hair--not until the last echo of his footsteps died away. Then I jumped up and ran as fast as I could--out of the forest--

WIGMAKER

Straight to the police.

WOODCUTTER

Yes.

WIGMAKER

Only on the way you happened to forget part of the story.

WOODCUTTER

No, I didn't forget. I-- (RUBBING HIS FOREHEAD.) I don't know--maybe I should have spoken up at court, but--all those different stories--I began to doubt my own senses. I couldn't understand--I still can't understand--why they all lied.

WIGMAKER

(TEASINGLY.) Did they?

WOODCUTTER

They must have! I know what I saw with my own eyes.

WIGMAKER

(LEANS TOWARD THE WOODCUTTER.) Why should I trust your eyes anymore than those of the other three? Like I told you--people see what they want to see and say what they want to hear. (AS THE WOODCUTTER STARTS TO PROTEST, HE HOLDS UP A HAND, GRINNING.) But don't worry--if I believed any story, it would be yours.

Not because of you, but only because it has a smell of truth. It's disappointing, isn't it? You'd like to think people are big--big heroes, big villains, big anything. But no--this is the way they are--small, weak, selfish, cowardly--faithless-- (HE LOOKS AT THE PRIEST'S BACK WITH A SMILE OF TRIUMPH.) There's your miracle, holy man.

WOODCUTTER

(TURNS ON THE WIGMAKER ANGRILY.) Why do you keep chopping to bits everything that's good?

WIGMAKER

It's all in the way you look at it. Some people think trees are good--yet you chop them down. Me--I have nothing, I am nothing--and I've long since given up deluding myself. To me, truth is a firefly--now you see it, now you don't. And lies--they're no more than the little bugs that go to bed with me. I swat them for amusement-- (WITH A SHRUG.) It's the only form of cleanliness I can afford.

(THE PRIEST'S FACE IS BLEAK, EMPTY. PICKING UP HIS STAFF AND PACK, HE STEPS DOWN THE GATE. THERE'S A SOUND SUDDENLY, FROM SOMEWHERE IN THE BACK--THE ODD, CHOKED SOUND OF A BABY'S CRYING. THE THREE MEN TURN, LOOKING AROUND QUESTIONINGLY.)

WOODCUTTER

Listen! That's not a crow! (THE WIGMAKER RUNS OFF THE REAR GATE. THE WOODCUTTER RISES.) What is it?

(IN A MOMENT, THE WIGMAKER RETURNS, CARRYING A BLANKET-WRAPPED BUNDLE.)

PRIEST

(DROPPING HIS PACK AND COMING UP TO THE LEFT SIDE OF THE WIGMAKER.) A baby!

WIGMAKER

They're always dumping them here. (EXAMINING THE BLANKET.) Look at this blanket. Wool--real wool. (QUICKLY STRIPPING THE BLANKET OFF THE BABY.) It must be worth at least--

PRIEST

(OUTRAGED.) What are you doing? Give me the child! (HE TEARS THE BABY AWAY FROM THE WIGMAKER, WHO MANAGES TO HANG ON TO THE PRECIOUS BLANKET.)

WOODCUTTER

(CROSSES TO THE RIGHT SIDE OF THE WIGMAKER.) What a vile thing--stripping an infant!

WIGMAKER

Someone's bound to do it. Why not me?

WOODCUTTER

I ought to break your bones.

WIGMAKER

(MOVING AWAY TO GATE RIGHT.) Oh, stop being such a hero.

WOODCUTTER

(A STEP TOWARD THE WIGMAKER.) You're just a ghou--a ghou!

WIGMAKER

(TURNING, STUNG.) Then what would you call its parents? They had themselves a little pleasure, then dumped the consequences--like some rubbish. If I'm a ghou, what are they?

WOODCUTTER

What do you know of parents and children?

WIGMAKER

(WITH A SHRUG.) What's there to know? Sometimes they throw you away--sometimes you throw them away.

WOODCUTTER

Your mind is so twisted! (CROSSING TO LOOK AT THE BABY IN THE PRIEST'S ARMS.) Can't you see this isn't a newborn infant? It must be four or five months old. What agonies these people must have suffered--to abandon such a child!

WIGMAKER

(PAINED.) Please--I've heard enough sad stories for one day.

(THE BABY BEGINS TO WHIMPER AGAIN.)

PRIEST

It's quivering--

WOODCUTTER

It'll die of cold. (ADVANCING ON THE WIGMAKER.) Give me back that blanket! (AS THE WIGMAKER IGNORES HIM, FOLDING IT DELIBERATELY.) Give it back, I tell you!

WIGMAKER

(DISMISSINGLY.) Oh, go away--

(THE WOODCUTTER TRIES TO SNATCH THE BLANKET AWAY FROM HIM. THEY GRAPPLE FOR IT--STRUGGLING FOR ITS POSSESSION. THE PRIEST TAKES A STEP TOWARD THEM HELPLESSLY. WITH THE CHILD IN HIS ARMS, THERE'S NOTHING HE CAN DO.)

WOODCUTTER

Let go of it!

WIGMAKER

Get away!

WOODCUTTER

Let go--or I'll--I'll call the police!

WIGMAKER

Call them! Go ahead and call them! (STRUGGLING TO DISENGAGE HIMSELF.) There are--other things--they might like to know. About--you. (THE WOODCUTTER STOPS FIGHTING--STARES AT HIM.) That's right--you! (STILL CLUTCHING THE BLANKET.) You'd better leave me alone. I've been very generous to you--so far.

WOODCUTTER

(UNCERTAINLY.) Generous?

WIGMAKER

Very generous, my friend--my good, honest, self-righteous friend-- (CONTEMPTUOUSLY.) --considering that you're a lying hypocrite like all the rest of them! You may have fooled the Magistrate--but not me!

PRIEST

(LOOKS FROM ONE TO THE OTHER IN BEWILDERMENT.) What are you talking about?

WIGMAKER

He knows well enough. Ask him--just ask him! (THE PRIEST LOOKS AT THE WOODCUTTER, WHO DOESN'T MEET HIS EYES. POINT-EDLY, TO THE WOODCUTTER.) Where is the husband's sword, that fancy sword with the silver handle? Tell me that. No one took it from the scene of the murder--yet the police couldn't find it. What happened? Did it melt away? Was it swallowed up into the earth?

WOODCUTTER

I--don't know.

WIGMAKER

You don't know! (TO THE PRIEST.) Just look at his face. (TO THE WOODCUTTER, RELENTLESSLY.) What was it the Medium said--? "Someone approached softly--drew the sword out of the dead man's breast--even before he was cold--"

WOODCUTTER

(DESPERATELY, SHAKING HIS HEAD.) No--!

WIGMAKER

(COCKY NOW, HE POKES HIM IN THE CHEST WITH A FINGER.) How much did you get for it? Plenty, I'll bet. And you call me a ghou! (THE WOODCUTTER TURNS TO MEET THE ANGUISHED, QUESTIONING EYES OF THE PRIEST. SUDDENLY, HE WILTS, AND SINKS DOWN ON THE TOP OF THE STEPS OF THE GATE. TO THE WOODCUTTER.) You were so eager to spare his feelings, I thought I'd help you cover up. You know, as one thief to another. But that's what you get when you try to do someone a good turn. (THE PRIEST HAS TURNED AWAY, BROKENLY. THE WIGMAKER STEPS DOWN THE GATE, AND LOOKS UP THE SKY.) Looks like a break in the storm. (HE TURNS BACK. THE WOODCUTTER SITS THERE WITH HIS HEAD DROPPING DOWN AGAINST HIS CHEST.) Oh, don't take it so hard. (HE COMES UP AND SQUATS DOWN BESIDE THE WOODCUTTER. FRIENDLIER NOW.) I once saw a painting--a man hanging by a rope over a precipice. On top were wild beasts ready to devour him if he went up. Down below lay a dragon waiting to catch him if he fell. And all the time a white rat, representing day, and a black rat, representing night, were gnawing away at the rope. (PATTING HIM ON THE SHOULDER, ENCOURAGINGLY.) That's the way it is, my friend. So let's not argue about right and wrong, the few minutes we're dangling here. (HE RISES AND MOVES TOWARD THE REAR GATE, TURNS.) Anyway, my thanks to you--both--for such an entertaining afternoon. (HOLDING UP THE BLANKET.) And profitable, too. (HE LAUGHS, TUCKING THE FOLDED BLANKET INTO HIS SHIRT AS HE HURRIES AWAY THROUGH THE REAR OF THE GATE AND OUT OF SIGHT.)

(FOR A LONG WHILE, THE TWO MEN STAY THERE SILENTLY, NOT LOOKING AT EACH OTHER. THEN THE PRIEST CROSSES TO GET HIS PACK. AS HE BENDS TO PICK IT UP, THE BABY BEGINS TO CRY AGAIN. HE STRAIGHTENS QUICKLY, SHIFTING THE BABY IN HIS ARMS. THE WOODCUTTER HAS RAISED HIS HEAD AND IS WATCHING AS THE PRIEST TRIES INEXPERTLY TO COMFORT THE INFANT WITH AWKWARD PATS.)

WOODCUTTER

(RISES AND COMES OVER, HESITANTLY.) Please-- (HOLDING OUT HIS ARMS.) Let me--

PRIEST

(TURNING AWAY, HARSHLY.) Let you what? Strip off the rest

of its clothes?

WOODCUTTER

(AS THE PRIEST CROSSES TO GATE RIGHT, THE WOODCUTTER DRAWS BACK, HIS LIPS TREMBLING.) I know. And I don't blame you. Why should you trust me? But-- (AS ALWAYS, THE WORDS COME HARD.) I have six of my own at home. Hungry, sometimes-- cold, frightened. They cry, too. (THE PRIEST TURNS BACK SLOWLY, BEGINNING TO TAKE IN THE MEANING BEHIND THE WORDS. UNDER HIS GAZE, THE WOODCUTTER LOWERS HIS EYES APOLOGETICALLY.) What can I say? A silver-handled sword can dry alot of tears. (THE BABY'S CRYING BECOMES MORE VIOLENT, CHOKED. THE WOODCUTTER FINDS IT IMPOSSIBLE TO DO NOTHING. TENTATIVELY, HE REACHES OUT HIS ARMS TOWARD THE CHILD AGAIN.) Please-- (THIS TIME THE PRIEST MAKES NO MOVE TO STOP HIM AS HE TAKES THE BABY. EXPERTLY, YET TENDERLY, HE PUTS IT OVER HIS SHOULDER, PATTING AND RUBBING ITS BACK AS HE MAKES COMFORTING LITTLE SOUNDS. THE BABY'S CRYING TRICKLES OFF AND STOPS. HE REMOVES THE BABY FROM HIS SHOULDER AND CRADLES IT IN HIS ARMS.) It will be hard for you to travel--with an infant. The road is often steep--lonely-- (HESITANTLY.) Maybe--I could take it home with me. There's little enough, but-- (LOOKING DOWN AT THE BABY, HE SMILES.) How much can such a small mouth eat? (THE PRIEST STANDS LOOKING AT HIM, WORDLESS SUDDENLY IN THE MIDST OF AN IMMENSE, DAWNING COMPREHENSION. AT HIS SILENCE, THE WOODCUTTER HOLDS OUT THE BABY.) I'm sorry--I shouldn't have asked.

PRIEST

No--keep it. (AS THE WOODCUTTER STARES AT HIM.) Take it with you.

WOODCUTTER

But--you heard it yourself--I'm a coward, a thief, a liar--

PRIEST

(NODDING.) You're many things. A man--like all men.

WOODCUTTER

Then you--forgive me?

PRIEST

Forgive you? (LOOKING OFF TOWARD THE CITY.) I'm the one who must go back to be forgiven. I thought only how much I could teach the people. (HE LOOKS AT THE WOODCUTTER.) But it is you who teach me.

WOODCUTTER

(SHAKING HIS HEAD DUMBLY.) I'm afraid I--I'm still too ignorant to understand.

PRIEST

(WITH A HALF-SMILE.) I thank Buddha for such ignorance.

WOODCUTTER

(PEERING OFF.) The rain has stopped. (AS THE PRIEST GOES TO PICK UP HIS STAFF AND PACK.) The sun will soon dry the ground, the trees-- (LOOKING AROUND HIM.) --the Gate.

PRIEST

(FOLLOWING THE WOODCUTTER'S EYES.) The Rashomon. Somehow, it's no longer so fearsome--with all its crows and corpses and jackals. (LOOKING DOWN AT THE BABY.) Even out of its crumbling ruins can come--life. (THE TEMPLE BELLS SOUND THE HOUR. AS THE WOODCUTTER LOOKS OFF, THE PRIEST UNDERSTANDS.) It's late. They'll be looking for you at home.

WOODCUTTER

I'd better go. (THE PRIEST SMILES AT HIM. THE WOODCUTTER SMILES BACK--THEN GOES DOWN THE STEPS OF THE GATE. THERE HE TURNS TO LOOK BACK AT THE PRIEST.)

(AT A LOSS FOR WORDS, THE WOODCUTTER BOWS. THE PRIEST RETURNS THE BOW EVEN MORE DEEPLY. SHIFTING THE BABY IN HIS ARMS, THE WOODCUTTER TURNS AND HURRIES OFF WHERE HE CAME FROM. THE PRIEST STANDS LOOKING AFTER THE WOODCUTTER UNTIL HE IS OUT OF SIGHT. MUSIC. "EPILOQUE". THEN HE TURNS, HIS FACE AT PEACE FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE WE'VE SEEN HIM. HE GLANCES OFF AT THE ROAD HE WAS HEADING FOR. THE AIR IS CLEAN AND SWEET AFTER THE RAIN. HE TAKES A DEEP BREATH, HOISTS HIS PACK OVER HIS SHOULDER--THEN STARTS BACK TOWARD

THE TEMPLE BELLS, TOWARD THE TEEMING CITY AND HIS UNFINISHED  
WORK. THE LIGHTS ON RASHOMON FADE OUT.)

PART III

CENTRAL STATISTICS

PART III

STATISTICAL METHODS IN RESEARCH

The purpose of this part is to present the methods of statistical analysis and to discuss the principles of sampling and estimation. The material will be divided into two sections. The first section will deal with the theory of statistics and the second section will deal with the application of statistical methods to research.

The theory of statistics is a branch of mathematics which deals with the collection, analysis, interpretation, and presentation of data. It is a science which seeks to draw conclusions from the data. The theory of statistics is divided into two main branches: descriptive statistics and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics is concerned with the description of the data, while inferential statistics is concerned with the drawing of conclusions from the data. Inferential statistics is further divided into two main branches: estimation and hypothesis testing. Estimation is concerned with the estimation of the population parameters, while hypothesis testing is concerned with the testing of the null hypothesis against the alternative hypothesis.

The application of statistical methods to research is a process which involves the selection of the appropriate statistical method for the analysis of the data. The selection of the appropriate statistical method depends on the nature of the data and the research objectives. The application of statistical methods to research is a process which involves the selection of the appropriate statistical method for the analysis of the data.

## PART III

## CRITICAL EVALUATION

The purpose of this part is to present the director's personal critical evaluation of his work on Rashomon. The analysis will be divided into four sections: (1) goals and achievements in interpretation, (2) actor-director relationship, (3) audience reaction, and (4) personal observations.

Goals and Achievements in Interpretation

The director saw Rashomon as a story depicting the different aspects of the truth of human nature. It is not merely a suspenseful, mysterious play. What the director tried to bring to the audience is similar to the aims of a modern abstract painting. The interpretation of it may vary according to each individual viewer, but the aesthetic beauty of the painting itself has its own integrity. From observation of the three performances held on the nights of July the eighth, ninth, and tenth in Taylor Theatre, the director was convinced that his interpretation of Rashomon was reasonably successful.

As the director indicated in the first part of this thesis, Rashomon is a play of a Japanese background with an universal theme. The original plan of its production was

designed to reveal the theme and background of the play in the most effective way under the facility possible in Taylor Theatre. In the script, a small horse is required for the first entrance of the husband and the wife. The husband is described as "leading a small white horse on which his wife is riding." As far as the theme of the play is concerned, the existence of the horse is of secondary importance. Certainly a samurai of that period would quite likely have had a horse for purposes of such a journey. But since a manageable horse was not available at the time, the play was done without one. The samurai appeared first with his wife following on foot. Since the horse was not used, certain changes in the dialogues of the priest, the woodcutter, the deputy, and the bandit were made in the director's prompt book.

To meet the fluidity of movement and mood of the play, an effective single theatrical setting provided the three separate locales needed. At down-right stage, there was a suggestion of an ancient police court, from which the characters who testify face an unseen magistrate, presumably in the position of the audience. At left stage, there was a suggestion of the Rashomon Gate. In center stage was the forest outside Kyoto city. Two separate parts of this forest were symbolically built on a revolvable platform. The director was satisfied with the outcome of the color and form of each locale. They fulfilled the functions of their roles. However, two suggestions were made after the final performance

by the members in the cast and friends of the director. The director believed that these two suggestions were of practical value in the betterment of the achievement that he set out for himself. These were: (1) the painted arch used to frame the forest area could have been made three dimensional like the rest of the unit sets. This, the director felt, could contribute to the total unity of the picture on the stage., (2) the Rashomon Gate and the steps leading to it could have been enlarged and widened to almost twice the original size. If this had been done, the director would have had a more varied blocking, and, therefore, had the opportunity for more interesting compositions in the Gate scenes.

Each of the three locales mentioned above was helped by special lighting to distinguish one from the others. Supposedly, the light for the Rashomon Gate was bleak, cold, rainswept. The police court was shot through with a beam of bright sunlight. The forest was flooded by the hot mid-noon light of Summer. As a result, the light for the Rashomon Gate failed to achieve the exact mood planned. The reason was that the director did not clearly convey what he really wanted to the designer. Also, the projection on the cyclorama proved to be too light to suggest the silhouette of the rest of the forest.

The music for the play was carefully selected from the sound track of the original Broadway production of Rashomon

in 1959 and some Asian musical recordings. The four pieces of music used in this production were entitled "Prologue", "In The Grove", "Interlude", and "Epilogue". They were chosen to establish the mood, to cast the spell, and to suggest the Oriental background of the play. Except for some technical problems which occurred during the performances, such as the timing and volume required for each piece of music, the director was pleased with their general effect. The sound effects for the play were largely centered on the soul voice of the dead samurai torn from the depths of anguish, and echoed in the black tunnel of the medium's frightful mouth. This recording was made and remade many times in the radio station on campus until it reached the desired chilling effect. Unfortunately the sound system in Taylor Theatre then was somehow unable to reproduce the exact effect recorded on the tape. Some parts of the dead husband's speech lost its clarity. In addition the light designed for this particular scene failed, and thus the intensive moments of it were greatly decreased.

Personally, the director was very satisfied and appreciated the work done by the costume designer. A complaint was made by the actress playing the wife. The kimono worn by her turned out a little bit too heavy for her to move freely and to take off easily. To remedy the problem was to remake the kimono. Since the budget left at the time would not allow the fulfillment of this idea, the actress was asked

by the director to endure it. However, the setting, the music, and the costumes were all successfully touched with the Japanese flavor intended. The overall effect of this unity gave the production a certain style and impact.

According to the nature of the play, Rashomon is meant to be done in a western theatre style. The director was first puzzled by the question of how to bring out the Japanese taste as much as possible from the American cast he had, to present it on the stage, and to be accepted by an American audience. Later, a decision was made to show only a Japanese flavor instead of the strict taste under the following considerations: (1) most members in the cast were lacking in the necessary orientation about medieval Japanese living and culture. To adhere to Japanese taste would have required more rehearsing time than was actually available., (2) Rashomon is a play of theme rather than a period play. Colored by the Japanese flavor in the ways of speaking and movement of the characters, the deliberate slow pace of the play was conceivable. Besides the play is constructed by four equally divided stories told separately by the bandit, the wife, the husband, and the wooductter. The director's interpretation of it, as he stated in the first part of this thesis, demanded the actors to play each version with equal sincerity and importance. What worried the director during the rehearsal was to speed up the pace of the play to a degree that his artistic interpretation could be justified at the same time without being

found too slow by the audience. In fluidly mounted flash-backs, the production was carried out well by the members of the cast and accepted by the audience.

Fortunately a choreographer familiar with Japanese fencing was obtained. After the initial conference with the director, a well conceived sword fight between the husband and the bandit was choreographed. It was of comparatively exquisite stylized precision. The successful performance of the sword fight contributed greatly to the overall success of the production.

Considering all aspects, the director felt that the production of Rashomon was exotic and organic to a way of life, thought and feeling.

#### Actor-Director Relationship

Auditions for the production of Rashomon were held on the night of the tenth of June in Taylor Theatre. Only ten people appeared, seven males and three females. The director was disappointed but not discouraged. A day later, a cast of nine was selected, and parts carefully assigned.

Immediately after the cast was selected, the director realized that there were two major problems that needed to be conquered. The first problem was that most cast members lacked theatre experience. Some had never been on stage. The second problem was that the actors did not have the slightest idea about medieval Japanese living and culture.

Some basic stage techniques were taught at the beginning of the rehearsals. In addition to the discussions, certain records, books, magazines, and pictures related to Japan were used to orient the actors. Also, a reasonable amount of time was spent on the individual coaching of Japanese manners. The common difficulty faced by all the actors was how to kneel and squat in a Japanese way. Several body positions were suggested by the director to give them more comfortable practical practice of these actions. A special exercise centered on sitting and walking was recommended to the actor who was playing the husband. He had a hard time conceiving and portraying the necessary manner of a medieval samurai.

Because of the personal obligations of some cast members, a flexible rehearsal schedule was designed to save time and energy of both the director and the actors. It worked out very well. The mutual understanding of the value of each rehearsal period was highly appreciated. As rehearsals were in progress, the acting problems which occurred were, more or less, personal. The actor who played the priest was too stiff for the part. After reading his written analysis of the characterization of the priest, the director discovered that his interpretation of the psychological status of the priest was too immobile for a stage representation. Several private discussions ensued. He was convinced by the director to be more physically respondent on the stage.

The three most demanding roles in the play are the husband, the wife, and the bandit. Certainly the director asked and expected a lot from the actors playing these parts. They were often reminded by the director of the importance of their roles in a successful production of this play. The vitality and enthusiasm shown by them during rehearsals was very encouraging. Occasionally additional rehearsals were held with them outside the regular schedule. However, the personal acting problem of each of them was great. For example, the unevenness of the wife's characterization portrayed by the actress was enhanced by her uncontrolled, high-pitched voice. The blocking was constantly ruined by her excessive movements and gestures which were unsuitable for her part. The versatility of the characterization of the wife could only be differentiated by her continuously piling up high-pitched voice and stronger movements. Exercises for better breath control were required by the director as part of her daily practice. Work on the contrast and subtlety of the lines given was emphasized. She was told to suppress her movements and gestures to a more feminine quality needed for her part. It was through about three weeks of long, hard, sometimes frustrating rehearsal that her characterization of the wife began to reveal a more acceptable reality.

One of the most rewarding experiences of the director during the rehearsal was his work with the actor who played the bandit. This actor had no theatre experience before.

He was given the part because of his vocal quality, physical appearance, and self-confidence on stage. After a couple of rehearsals, the director was glad to know that his choice was right. This actor showed the potential and ability to play his part. The major problem encountered by the director was how to help him get over his seemingly reserved, quiet personality. The director believed that once he learned to open himself up on the stage, it would help tremendously with his characterization of the bandit. The bandit in the play, from the director's point of view, should behave with outright animal arrogance and repeatedly risk in clipped, guttural cries of joy and dismay, the kind of sudden emotional contrast that lesser actors would shun for fear of getting laughs. The exercise of demonstrating three different emotional appearances one after the other without any order by laughing, crying, and cursing with a decreasing break moment in between was improvised to help the actor to open up. To catch the aggressive essence of this character, the actor was also asked by the director to imagine himself as a lion or tiger crawling all over the stage. As a result, these two improvisations mentioned above proved to have the decisive and practical value of helping the actor to give a bravura performance as the bandit.

The acting problem shared by all the actors was that the play itself does not supply enough background information of each character and situation. The actors, along

with the director, were encouraged to suggest any logical and practical motivation to better their characterizations of the parts and to achieve the necessary effect of certain scenes. Considered as an artist, each actor was asked by the director to be as creative as he could be within the framework of the play as established in the first reading.

It is critical to have a good and productive relationship between the director and the actors in order to have a good performance. The director believed that such a relationship was preserved throughout the rehearsal of Rashomon, although the possibility of a better one was attainable. The actors were very co-operative and responsive to whatever they were asked by the director. It was a game of give-and-take. Personally, the director felt very grateful for what he had learned from his cast members.

#### Audience Reaction

The increasing attendance over the performances of Rashomon indicated the impact of the production. The director, the cast, and the production staff were greatly excited by the warm response of the audience on the opening night, and by the critical reviews printed in the following day's local newspapers. It seemed that the production was enjoyed and appreciated by the audience.

From some random examples and observations, the director ventured to catalogue the audience reaction out of the

three night performances. The director felt that a large percentage of the audience reaction could be summed up in one question, "Who's telling the truth?". A question like this meant that they were considerably engaged by the play. The critics' views of the production could represent the reaction of a small percentage of the audience. These people were more sophisticated. They had an objective attitude toward the story, and could read, in a way, into the subtext of the play. As the Greensboro Record staff writer Peter Leo stated in his review of the play:

Set in medieval Japan, Rashomon centers on the murder of a samurai warrior and the rape of his wife in a forest area. The play gradually unfolds as a philosophical whodunit before finally resolving itself in eloquent testimony to simple humanity, not great and noble so much as frail and halting but humanity nonetheless.<sup>4</sup>

Either one of these two reactions showed that the audience seemed to be caught up in the play and reacted much as the director expected.

The cultural barrier of the play was very small. The audience was not bothered by the style and pace of the play. The only thing that looked strange to them was the thundering nobility that drove each of the principals to commit the murder, a nobility that overrides any fear of judicial consequences. The reason for this was explained by the director in his research on the historical background of the

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<sup>4</sup>Peter Leo, "Play Deserves Audience," The Greensboro Record, July 9, 1971, Sec. B., p. 8.

play in the first part of this thesis.

Compliments were given by the audience, the critics to the director, the set designer, the choreographer, and individual cast members. The weaknesses shown within the control of the production were excused by the audience in general under the pretext of a successful representation of the play on the whole.

It was a comfort to the director that the play was deserving of the audience. However, the director holds the conviction that great improvements could be made in this production. It could be better acted, prettier to look at, and more rewarding to think about.

#### Personal Observations

Rashomon was the first long-length play that the director had directed. It is needless to say what a rewarding experience it was to him. Obviously the inexperience and the language problem of the director did create some problems in his directing during the preparation of the production. The diplomacy and tact used by the director during the rehearsal helped in solving part of these problems. But the true fact was that the people working with him were very nice, understanding, and patient. Without their sincere co-operation, the director can hardly imagine that the production of Rashomon would have been as it was.

The director confirms that a firm and open-minded director will more likely be able to supply an inspiring, productive working atmosphere for the persons working with him, then the outcome of whatever they are undertaking can be more satisfactorily fulfilled.

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APPENDIX

# 罗生门



Theatre  
Taylor Building July 8, 9, 10, 1971 8:30 p.m.

UNC-G THEATRE  
presents  
The M.F.A. Thesis Production of

RASHOMON  
by Fay and Michael Kanin

Directed by . . . . . Kwang Hwa Su  
Lighting, scenery designed by . . Frank L. Whaley, Jr.  
Choreography by. . . . . Wanda Lee Dickey  
Costumes by. . . . . Susan Tucker

CAST  
(in order of appearance)

Priest . . . . . T. D. Dawson  
Woodcutter . . . . . Walker May  
Wigmaker . . . . . John H. Lytton  
Deputy. . . . . Stephen Clay Settle  
Bandit . . . . . Sunnan K. Kubose  
Husband. . . . . Bruce Allan Brown  
Wife. . . . . Penny Ann Rand  
Mother. . . . . Sarah Wallace Buxton  
Medium . . . . . Roberta Penn Linder

SETTING

Kyoto Japan, about a thousand years ago; at the  
Rashomon Gate, the police court and a forest of  
the past.

There will be one ten minute intermission.

Produced by special arrangement with Samuel French, Inc.

Stage Manager

Assistant Stage

House Manager

Scenery . . . . .

Lights . . . . .

Sound . . . . .

Crew Member

Carol

Chris

Box Office and

Cheryl

Costumes . . . . .

Cheryl

WFMY-TV, W

Radio, WBIG

Daily News,

Bureau, The

## PRODUCTION STAFF

Stage Manager . . . . .	Doris Drye Johnson
Assistant Stage Manager . . .	Carol Ann Ingram
House Manager . . . . .	Wilma Wilson
Scenery . . . . .	Thomas D. Dawson, head
Lights . . . . .	Kathleen McGillard, head
Sound . . . . .	Susan Grall, head
Crew Members . . . . .	Cheryl East, Sam Giles, Carol Ann Ingram, Diane Marks, Tim Morris, Chris Slack, Marilyn Trigg, Darryl Wechsler,
Box Office and Publicity . . .	Nancy New, head Cheryl East, Wilma Wilson
Costumes . . . . .	Susan Tucker, head Cheryl East, Debra Small, Betty Vanstory

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