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SF PERUSALS

Rashomon

A Drama in Two Acts

by
Fay Kanin
and
Michael Kanin

Based on stories by
Ryunosuke Akutagawa

A Samuel French Acting Edition



New York Hollywood London Toronto
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RASHOMON

RASHOMON, by Fay and Michael Kanin; presented at The Music Box, N. Y. C., Jan. 27, 1959, by David Susskind and Hardy Smith; directed by Peter Glenville; settings and costumes by Oliver Messel; lighting by Jo Mielziner; music by Lawrence Rosenthal; associate producer, Michael Abbott.

CAST

(In Order of Appearance)

PRIEST ---------- *Michael Shillo*

WOODCUTTER ---------- *Akim Tamiroff*

WIGMAKER ---------- *Oscar Homolka*

DEPUTY ---------- *Jack Bittner*

BANDIT ---------- *Rod Steiger*

HUSBAND ---------- *Noel Willman*

WIFE ---------- *Claire Bloom*

MOTHER ---------- *Ruth White*

MEDIUM ---------- *Elsa Freed*

Production Stage Manager, *Jose Vega*

RASHOMON

THE SETTING

The action takes place in Kyoto, Japan, about a thousand years ago—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 Right Stage, there is a suggestion of the Rashomon Gate. Before the time of our play, Rashomon was the largest gate in Kyoto, the ancient capital of Japan. It was 106 feet wide and 26 feet deep, its stone wall rising 75 feet and topped by a ridge-pole. With the decline of West Kyoto, the gate fell into bad repair and became a decayed relic with an unsavory reputation, a hideout for thieves and a dump for unclaimed corpses.

At Left Stage, there is a suggestion of an ancient Police Court, from which the characters who testify face an unseen Magistrate, presumably in the position of the audience.

Commanding most of the Stage is the forest outside of the city. Two separate parts of this forest need to be seen at different times—one featuring a winding pathway, and the other a wide clearing within a grove of cedars and bamboo.

Each locale has its own distinct lighting: The Rashomon Gate is bleak, cold, rainswept. The Police Court is shot through with a beam of bright sunlight. And in the forest the light filtering through the trees mottles everything with an intricate pattern of soft shadows.

Many variations of this unit set are acceptable. In its simplest form, conceivably, it can consist of three tall screens or panels, painted in Japanese style to represent the three principal locales. In its most ambitious form, it can be like the original New York production. In this, the main parts of the forest were built on a large turntable. There were no curtains to mask it as it revolved from

one locale to another, mostly in the dark, occasionally lighted and in view of the audience. The Police Court platform projected outward from the direct center of the Stage, and, in the dark, an elevator raised the characters into position and lowered them out of sight. Thus, when the lights came on, the Police Court seemed to appear out of nowhere, the characters in the midst of their testimony. The effect was one of utmost fluidity—almost cinematic.

From one extreme to the other there are any number of possibilities. The edge of the Rashomon Gate can be as primary or elaborate as facilities allow, so long as it properly suggests a seldom-used place in a state of decay. Depending on the structure of the theater, the Gate can even be built outside *the proscenium arch. The Police Court need never be more than a platform or a grass mat or a small area, backed by a curtain or a wing or the suggestion of a stone wall. It can be on stage or it can be a platform projecting outward from the apron. But in any case, it must be placed so that the actors can get on and off unobtrusively when the lights are out, and can move easily from the Court into the Forest as the action demands. The Forest, of course, occupies most of the central stage. A painted backdrop can give the necessary atmosphere and the illusion of depth. (In the New York production, this background was achieved by an impressionistic projection of trees upon the cyclorama.)*

The secondary Forest locale, the "winding pathway," can be differentiated merely by lights—or it can be a cutout drop hung substantially in front of the backdrop, and flown to reveal the inner part of the forest. Beyond this, any desired number of cutouts or dimensional set-pieces of trees and foliage can be added. If a turntable is available, some of the exciting effects of the original production can be approximated.

One thing, however, is mandatory in whatever setting is used—an arrangement of scenery and lighting which will allow the audience's attention to be directed from one scene to another with the greatest possible fluidity.

THE SETTING

This is an imaginative play. It can be adapted to a stage of any size or form. The objective of the physical production must be to help create a magical mood—to cast a spell. Ideally, director and designer, as well as all others concerned, should allow their imaginations and talents the greatest possible freedom in creating something original and artful.

MUSIC and SOUND EFFECTS

Music and sound effects are obtainable only on a tape. For full information write direct to Masque Sound & Recording Corporation, 331 West 51st Street, New York, N. Y. 10019.

Rashomon

ACT I

Rashomon Gate.

The introductory MUSIC [SOUND CUE # 1] *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. A large wooden dragonhead, its crimson lacquer rubbed off badly, lies at the foot of the broken steps which are dotted with the white droppings of crows and with rank grass growing in the crevices.*

The WIND which signals the approaching dusk howls through the eaves of the gate.

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. His staff leans against a rotting post. He seems more tired than his thirty-odd years warrant—a study in defeat—as he holds his dark kimono about him and stares off into space.*

After a few moments, a WOODCUTTER *comes running through the rain toward the gate. He wears a garment of homespun material, pulled up between his legs and held at his waist with a belt of rope. His handmade axe is stuck in his belt. He hurries up the steps of the gate, looking around, then stops short*

as he sees the PRIEST. [SOUND CUE # 2.] *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 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 and his head sinks down into his hands desolately. 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 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. His hand moves over one of the rotting posts.) The great Rashomon Gate— (*A piece splinters off in his hand.*) It crumbles—like the people. [SOUND CUE # 3.]

(*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. [SOUND CUE # 4.] My clothes always smell of rotting wood. (*Then.*) 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. Such horrible crimes—rape, bloodshed. And then, in front of the Magistrate 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. 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? (*There's a distant roll of THUNDER.* [SOUND CUE # 5.] *The* WOODCUTTER *looks upward, uneasily.*) The all-seeing Buddha knows—he knows how unworthy I am. (*He sinks down beside the bonfire again.*)

WOODCUTTER. 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.* [SOUND CUE # 6.] *The* PRIEST *and* WOODCUTTER, *startled too, look up as the* WIGMAKER'S *head appears among the rafters above, muttering.* [SOUND CUE # 7.]) Can't find a place to sleep in peace any more— (*He starts to climb down with remarkable assurance for his sixty-odd years. He wears a faded and torn garment with a catch-all bag slung over his shoulder. His face is a mass of wrinkles and his body gnarled, but there is about him the alertness and resourcefulness of one who has learned to live in the jungle. It's hard to believe that he was ever, even at birth, anything but a cynic.*)

WOODCUTTER. (*Turning to the* PRIEST *apprehensively.*) Let's go to another part of the gate, holy one. [SOUND CUE # 8.]

PRIEST. Why?

WOODCUTTER. Please—you never know what you'll encounter here.

WIGMAKER. (*Coming down.*) Caw—caw—caw!

WOODCUTTER. (*Turning on him.*) Hold your tongue, you scavenger!

WIGMAKER. (*As he drops to the ground.*) 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. Impossible. He woke me up. They usually put me to sleep.

WOODCUTTER. (*To the* 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 wigmaker.

WOODCUTTER. Wigmaker! With hair stolen from corpses!

WIGMAKER. The very finest 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. (*Rubbing himself as if chilly, he proceeds to gather some stray pieces of wood and toss them on the bonfire.*) There's one, for instance, a female—beautiful black hair—used to sell dried snake meat to the soldiers. Told them it was 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 pause, grudgingly.*) A man was murdered.

WIGMAKER. Just one? A slow day.

(*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—how it happened, the things we heard at the Police Court—

WIGMAKER. (*Indicating the* PRIEST.) He was there, too?

WOODCUTTER. 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—?

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.

WIGMAKER. Both? (*Turning to the* PRIEST.) Then there *was* a woman?

PRIEST. (*Nodding.*) Yes. The murdered man's wife. I passed them on the road from Sekiyama, in the early afternoon. She was seated on a horse, he was leading it. He looked so formidable in his samurai robes—his sword

at his side, a bow and quiver on his back. 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? No, no—the hand, the face, was all I saw and all I wanted to see. 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. (*Throws a few more sticks on the fire.*) Any idea who did the sticking?

WOODCUTTER. They arrested someone.

WIGMAKER. They always arrest someone. But is he guilty?

WOODCUTTER. It's Tajomaru.

WIGMAKER. (*Eyes widening.*) 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. 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! Steal a coin, a pair of sandals, a chicken so scrawny you can't get your teeth into it—pull a hair from the head 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 man with a magic name. Soon they're talking about you, telling stories and singing songs about you. Soon you're someone to be reckoned with—and "it's not quite so simple!" (*He spits on the ground disgustedly.*)

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

WIGMAKER. 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. Do you remember what he said in the Police Court?

WIGMAKER. (*Sitting.*) Deputy? What deputy?

WOODCUTTER. The one who captured Tajomaru. [SOUND CUE # 9.] 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, *a small but wiry man, is kneeling on a grass mat 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. He wears a rough, loose robe of the period, his chest partly bared.*)

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. He must have been thrown by the horse that was standing a few yards away. (*As* TAJOMARU *snorts without looking at him.*) . . . A white horse, Your Excellency, with a fine mane. It matches the description of the one owned by the murdered man. Also, a bow wound with leather strips, a black lacquered quiver and seventeen arrows with hawk feathers—they were next to 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.*) It must be more painful to be thrown from a stolen horse than from any other. (*As* TAJOMARU *laughs derisively, he stops, then continues hesitantly.*) As I said, I went over to where he had fallen, and—

TAJOMARU. Tajomaru fall from a horse? (*He spits at the* DEPUTY, *who retreats a little.*) There's no horse living can throw Tajomaru! I was sick—poisoned! (*Contemptuously.*) *He* 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.*) . . . Yes, Your Excellency. As you wish. (*Still bowing, he backs off into the darkness and disappears.*)

TAJOMARU. Tajomaru thrown from a horse— Hah! He was a good horse, that one, strong and surefooted. I ran him hard all day. But 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 rode on an hour or so 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 got off the horse and doubled over on the ground and— (*He stops, doubled over, remembering the agony. Then he shakes off the weak moment.*) Tajomaru fall off a horse! Only a fool could have such a 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 bonds in a gesture of strength and defiance.*) Yes, it was I, Tajomaru, who killed the man! . . . Why? (*He smiles.*) Because of a little breeze. [SOUND CUE # 10.] (*Nodding.*) . . . 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, as the LIGHTS start slowly to dim on the Police Court and come up on the winding pathway in the forest.*) It was during the deadly heat of the afternoon. When it's so hot, a man's jaws stretch, his legs grow heavy— (*He yawns, moving lazily out of the Court toward the forest.*) And when your legs grow heavy—(*He stretches.*)—there's only one thing—to do— [SOUND CUE # 11.]

(*The LIGHTS are out on the Court now and up full on the forest.* TAJOMARU *drops down on a grassy knoll.* [RAISE # 10.] *Stretching out, he scratches himself luxuriously, closing his eyes. There is a long, quiet pause. Then, from the depths of the forest, the* HUSBAND *and* WIFE *appear. The* HUSBAND *is dressed in the robe of a samurai warrior, wears a sword with an elaborate silver handle and a quiver of arrows across his back. His hands, the shape of his head and his bearing show breeding and position as contrasted with the gross animal virility of the bandit. He leads a small white horse on which his* WIFE *is riding. The* WIFE *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, not unlike a mosquito netting, that completely obscures her face. The* HUSBAND, *noticing* TAJOMARU, *stops suspiciously.* [SOUND CUE # 12.] TAJOMARU *opens his eyes drowsily for a moment, then closes them again. The* HUSBAND *continues, leading the horse. As they get closer to* TAJOMARU, *a BREEZE flutters through the leaves, blowing the woman's veil.*

TAJOMARU'S *eyes open sleepily at the moment when the rippling veil allows a glimpse of her face. 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.*)

Ey! (*The* HUSBAND *wheels, holding the bridle of the horse. He looks at* TAJOMARU *then slowly leads the horse back toward him and stops.* TAJOMARU *looks up at the woman, back at the man. Then he walks deliberately around the horse, examining them from all sides. The* HUSBAND'S *hand goes slowly toward his sword.* [FADEOUT # 10.] *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? [SOUND CUE # 13.] (*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?

HUSBAND. Passing through. (*He puts his hand on the horse's bridle as if to start again.*)

TAJOMARU. You like swords? (*The* HUSBAND *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.

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, shifting his hand on the horse's bridle.*)

TAJOMARU. (*As though unconcerned.*) All right—I'll sell them to someone else. (*He starts away.*)

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.*) See—beyond the bamboos, where the cedars are.

HUSBAND. (*His eyes follow the pointing finger. He studies* TAJOMARU *narrowly. Finally making the decision.*) Wait. [SOUND CUE # 14.]

(*He leads the horse into the woods, tying the rein to the branch of a tree. Then he comes back to* TAJOMARU, *who makes an obsequious gesture, as if to say, "After* you." *The* HUSBAND *turns and goes off through the trees.* 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 bamboo. (*He shakes his head ruefully at the memory of the struggle.*) Then I thought of the woman—[SOUND CUE # 15.]

(*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.* [SOUND CUE # 16.] *The* WIFE *has dismounted from the horse and is walking among the trees, her veil still concealing her face. She's having a flirtation with an unseen bird. The* BIRD *chirps.* [SOUND CUE # 17.] *The* WIFE *answers him, echoing his chirp, and seating herself in the coolness of the grassy knoll. Silently,* TAJOMARU *moves to a closer bush, watching her intently from behind the masking leaves. The* BIRD *speaks again* [SOUND CUE # 18.]—*the* WIFE *answers. As the* BIRD *replies, the* WIFE *laughs—a bit of delicate music in her throat.* [SOUND CUE # 19.] *Suddenly, as if somehow aware of the eyes on her, she wheels toward the bush.* TAJOMARU, *caught, rises and emerges awkwardly.*)

Your husband—he says to wait here. He—he's picking out what he wants— (*The* WIFE *rises and faces him, silently, as he comes closer.*) There are many things for him to look at. Swords and—mirrors. It—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*—[SOUND CUE # 20.] *off in the direction in which her husband disappeared.*)

TAJOMARU. (*Stands looking after her.*) I could have stopped her— [FADE # 20.]

(*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—

(*The LIGHTS on the forest are slowly coming up.*)

I let her go to him. And I followed— [RAISE # 20.] (*He turns and disappears into the forest.*)

(*The Stage revolves to show us another part of the forest —the clearing in the bamboo grove. His hands tied behind him, the* HUSBAND *is secured to a bamboo stump, straining ineffectually against his bonds. There is a rustling in the thicket and the* WIFE *appears, 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, horrified; his face pale with shame at her witnessing his plight.* TAJOMARU *appears, coming up behind the* WIFE. *He stands watching them with an arrogant smile, enjoying the success of his plan. The* WIFE *slowly turns to look at him, then back at the* HUSBAND *as the significance of what this means begins to flood over her. 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. Such a show of spirit and temper is more than* TAJOMARU *counted on. He begins to grow more excited as he laughs, leading her on, always managing to escape from her furious thrusts. Panting now, her hair loosened, her face flushed, the* WIFE *fights on, almost hysterical with anger and frustration. 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.* [FADE OUT # 20.])

(*There's suddenly the sound of the* WIGMAKER'S *raucous laugh from the darkness. The LIGHTS fade out and 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. (*Moving 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 her 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!

WOODCUTTER. (*Outraged.*) Tajomaru's a savage—a wild beast!

WIGMAKER. But the women seem to like it. Especially the high-born ones with their 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.*)

WOODCUTTER. (*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 *gets up, too, and moves away, watching the* PRIEST.) All right, tell me more. Your story warms me more than this sickly fire. (*With a grimace, he blows on it, fanning up the flames a trifle.*) 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. (*Slowly.*) Yes, he said—more. He said—he never meant to kill. [SOUND CUE # 21.]

(*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. 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—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 have changed to the forest. The* WIFE *is lying on the ground, 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, turns, then crosses to her.*)
[CUT # 20.]

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 softly.*) 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 through the woods. 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? (*As she watches him, her lips*

tremulous.) 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. And he attacks with a ferocity demanded by his pent-up anger and emotion,* [SOUND CUE # 22.] *raining violent blows at* TAJOMARU *as though to chop him to bits in the first charge. But* TAJOMARU *defends himself well. His technique, obviously self-taught, is not as classically formal as the* HUSBAND'S. *But it is just as effective, springing as it does out of daily use in the cause of primitive self-preservation. It isn't long before the* HUSBAND *realizes that, against such an opponent, he cannot afford to exhaust himself in emotion and useless swordplay. 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. 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. With a triumphant shout, the* HUSBAND *extends his sword toward* TAJOMARU'S *throat. In*

that long moment before death, the point of the sword moves closer and closer to TAJOMARU'S *throat. Even facing the cold steel,* TAJOMARU *glares up at the* HUSBAND *arrogantly and not without a touch of admiration. Abruptly, he 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, accompanied by grunts and shouts, 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.* [FADE # 22.] *Panting,* TAJOMARU *picks up the weapon himself.* [SOUND CUE # 23.] *raises it high over his head and plunges it down to its fatal conclusion. There's a chilling cry and a gasp 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.*)

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 was the only man who ever

crossed swords with Tajomaru more than fifteen times. . . . 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 horse still grazing on the path, so I took it. And I sold her dagger 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 any more. With Tajomaru's confession and with her there to accuse him, he'll hang before morning. (*There's an oddly-human CAWING SOUND.*) [SOUND CUE # 24.]

WOODCUTTER. (*Startled.*) What's that noise?

WIGMAKER. (*Looking upward.*) The crows. They love to hear about hangings. (*He laughs.*)

PRIEST. 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. It's odd, but I found her not at all as Tajo-

maru described her. [SOUND CUE # 25.] 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 mat, staring emptily. Kneeling beside 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-flowers—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—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 nods.*) . . . 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. In the funeral procession, I will carry a cage of birds and set them free to remind everyone of his mercy and kindness. 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—

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—drew 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. [SOUND CUE # 26.] 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 bamboo stump—his face tense and pale, his eyes tightly shut.* TAJOMARU *is leaning against a tree, gulping wine from a small goatskin. He has evidently had enough to be boisterous—and dangerous. As he drinks, some of the wine spills down his bare chest and spatters his garment. He wipes his mouth with a hairy forearm, taking a few steps in the direction of the* WIFE.)
[FADE OUT # 26.]

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 it now.

(*He raises the goatskin pouch to his lips again. It's empty. Annoyed, he tosses it aside and, leaning against a tree, 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. Drawing his sword, he severs the rotten part of the peach in his hand, shoves the remainder into his mouth.*) 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 surveys 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 keep 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.

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 *heart 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 into the forest. 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 drawing his sword.*) He's gone—and we're still alive! (*Suddenly, she is overcome by hysterical sobs and laughter, and it is with difficulty*

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