

B U S U

Persons

MASTER

TARŌ KAJA

JIRŌ KAJA

(The Master, Tarō kaja, and Jirō kaja enter the stage along the Bridge. Tarō kaja and Jirō kaja seat themselves by the Name-Saying Seat. The Master as he introduces himself goes to the Wakī's Pillar.)

MASTER: I am a gentleman of this vicinity. I plan to go away to the mountains for a few days, and now I shall summon my servants to give them instructions about what to do during my absence.

Tarō kaja, where are you?

TARŌ: Here, Master.

(He gets up and goes toward the Master, then bows.)

MASTER: Call Jirō kaja too.

TARŌ: Yes, Master. Jirō kaja, the master wants you.

JIRŌ: I obey.

(He also comes forward and bows.)

TOGETHER: We are before you, Master.

MASTER: I have called you because I am going to the mountains for a few days, and I want you both to take good care of the house while I am away.

TARŌ: Your orders will be obeyed, Master, but you have always taken one of us with you on your journeys, and today too

TOGETHER: One of us would like to accompany you.

MASTER: No, that is out of the question. Today I have something important to leave in your care, and both of you must guard it. Wait here.

TOGETHER: Very good, Master.

(The Master goes to the Flute Pillar where he picks up a round lacquered cask about two feet high. He deposits it in the center of the stage, and returns to his former position.)

MASTER: This is what is known as *busu*, a deadly poison. If even a

wind blowing from its direction should strike you, it will mean instant death. Be on your guard.

TARŌ: Yes, Master.

JIRŌ: Excuse me, Master, but I would like to ask you something.

MASTER: What is it?

JIRŌ: Why do you keep such a dreadful poison in the house?

MASTER: The *busu* loves its master, and as long as it is the master who handles it, there is not the slightest danger. But if either of you so much as approach it, you will suffer instant death. Beware even of being touched by the wind from its direction.

JIRŌ: Yes, Master.

MASTER: Now I shall be leaving.

TARŌ: May you have a pleasant journey,

TOGETHER: And come back soon.

MASTER: Thank you.

(The Master goes to the Bridge, where he seats himself at the First Pine, indicating that he has disappeared. Tarō and Jirō see him off, then seat themselves at the back of the stage.)

TARŌ: He always takes one of us with him. I wonder why today he left both of us to look after the house.

JIRŌ: I wonder why.

TARŌ: At any rate, it's always lonesome being left here by oneself, but since we are both here today, we can have a pleasant talk.—
Oh!

JIRŌ: What is the matter?

TARŌ: There was a gust of wind from the *busu*!

JIRŌ: How frightening!

TARŌ: Let's move a little farther away.

JIRŌ: A good idea.

(They hastily move toward Bridge, then sit.)

TARŌ: Just as you said before, why should the master keep in the house a thing so deadly that even a breath of wind from it will cause instant death?

JIRŌ: However much it may love its master, I still don't understand why he keeps it.

TARŌ: You know, I'd like to have a look at the *busu*. What do you think it can be?

JIRŌ: Have you gone mad? Don't you know that even the wind from its way means certain death?

TARŌ: Let's go up to it fanning from this side. In that way we won't get any wind from it.

JIRŌ: That's a good idea.

(The two men stand, and fanning vigorously approach the cask.)

TARŌ: Fan, fan hard.

JIRŌ: I am fanning.

TARŌ: I'm going to untie the cord around it now, so fan hard.

JIRŌ: Right!

TARŌ: I've unfastened it. Now, I'll take off the cover.

JIRŌ: Do it quickly!

TARŌ: Keep fanning!

JIRŌ: I am fanning.

TARŌ: It's off! *(They flee to the Bridge.)* Oh, that's a relief!

JIRŌ: What's a relief?

TARŌ: That thing—it's not an animal or it would jump out.

JIRŌ: Perhaps it is only playing dead.

TARŌ: I'll have a look.

JIRŌ: That's a good idea.

(They approach the cask as before.)

TARŌ: Fan, fan hard!

JIRŌ: I am fanning!

TARŌ: Now I'm going to have a look, so fan hard!

JIRŌ: Right!

TARŌ: I've seen it! I've seen it! *(They flee as before to the Bridge.)*

JIRŌ: What did you see?

TARŌ: Something dark gray that looked good to eat. You know, I think I'd like a taste of that *busu*.

JIRŌ: How can you think of eating something which will kill you even if you only catch a whiff of it?

TARŌ: I must be bewitched by the *busu*. I can't think of anything but eating it. I will have a taste.

JIRŌ: You mustn't.

(He takes Tarō's sleeve, and they struggle.)

TARŌ: Let me go!

JIRŌ: I won't let you go!

TARŌ: I tell you, let me go!

JIRŌ: I tell you, I won't let you go!

(Tarō frees himself and approaches the cask. He uses his fan to scoop out the contents.)

TARŌ (singing): Shaking off with sorrow the sleeves of parting,
I come up to the side of the *busu*.

JIRŌ: Alas! Now he will meet his death.

TARŌ: Oh, I am dying. I am dying. (He falls over.)

JIRŌ: I knew it would happen. Tarō kaja! What is it? (He rushes to him.)

TARŌ: It's so delicious, I'm dying. (He gets up.)

JIRŌ: What can it be?

TARŌ: It's sugar!

JIRŌ: Let me have a taste.

TARŌ: Go ahead.

JIRŌ: Thank you. It really is sugar!

(The two of them eat, using their fans to scoop out the *busu*. Tarō, seeing that Jirō is too busy eating to notice, carries off the cask to the *Waki's* Pillar. While he is eating, Jirō comes up and takes the cask to the Facing Pillar.)

TARŌ: You mustn't eat it all by yourself. Let me have it!

JIRŌ: No, you were eating before I did. Give me some more.

TARŌ: Let's both eat it.

JIRŌ: A good idea.

(They put the cask between them.)

TARŌ: Delicious, isn't it?

JIRŌ: Really delicious.

TARŌ: The master told us that it was *busu*, thinking we wouldn't eat it then. That was really most disagreeable of him. Eat up!
Eat up!

JIRŌ: It was disagreeable of him to have told us that we would die instantly if we got so much as a whiff of it. Eat up! Eat up!

TARŌ: I can't stop eating.

JIRŌ: It feels as if our chins are sagging, doesn't it?

TARŌ: Eat up! Oh, it's all gone!

JIRŌ: Yes, all gone.

TARŌ: Well, you can be proud of yourself.

JIRŌ: I can be proud of myself. It was *you* who first looked at the *busu* and first ate it. I'll tell the master as soon as he gets back.

TARŌ: I was only joking. Now, tear up this *kaķemōno*.¹

JIRŌ: Very well.

(He goes to the *Waki's* Pillar and makes motions of tearing a *kaķemōno*.)

Sarari. Sarari. Pattari.

TARŌ: Bravo! First you looked at the *busu*, then you ate it, and now you've torn up the master's *kaķemōno*. I'll inform him of that as soon as he returns.

JIRŌ: I only did it because you told me. And I shall inform the master of that.

TARŌ: I was joking again. Now smash this bowl.

JIRŌ: No, I've had enough.

TARŌ: Then let's smash it together.

JIRŌ: All right.

(They go to the Facing Pillar and make motions of picking up a large bowl and dashing it to the ground.)

TOGETHER: *Garari chin*.

TARŌ: Ah—it's in bits.

JIRŌ: Now what excuse will we make?

TARŌ: When the master returns, the first thing to do is to burst into tears.

JIRŌ: Will tears do any good?

TARŌ: They will indeed. He'll be coming back soon. Come over here.

JIRŌ: Very well.

(They go to the back of the stage and sit there. The Master stands up and speaks at the First Pine.)

MASTER: I have completed my business now. I imagine that my servants must be waiting for my return. I shall hasten home. Ah, here I am already. Tarō kaja, Jirō kaja, I've returned!

¹ A picture or writing on silk or paper.

(He goes to the Waki's Pillar.)

TARŌ: He's back! Now start weeping! (They weep.)

MASTER: Tarō kaja, Jirō kaja! Where are you? What is the matter here? Instead of being glad that I have returned they are both weeping. If something has happened, let me know at once.

TARŌ: Jirō kaja, you tell the master.

JIRŌ: Tarō kaja, you tell the master.

MASTER: Whichever of you it is, tell me quickly.

TARŌ: Well, then, this is what happened. I thought that it wouldn't do for me to sleep while on such important duty, but I got sleepier and sleepier. To keep me awake I had a wrestling match with Jirō kaja. He is so strong that he knocked me over, and to keep from falling, I clutched at that *kakemono*, and ripped it as you can see.

MASTER: What a dreadful thing to happen! (He looks at the Waki's Pillar in amazement.) How could you tear up a precious *kakemono* that way?

TARŌ: Then he threw me back and spun me over the stand with the bowl on it, and the bowl was smashed to bits.

MASTER: What a dreadful thing! (He looks at the Facing Pillar in amazement.) You even smashed my precious bowl. What I am going to do?

TARŌ: Knowing that you would soon return, we thought that we could not go on living, so we ate up the *busu*, hoping thus to die. Isn't that so, Jirō kaja?

JIRŌ: Exactly.

TARŌ (singing): One mouthful and still death did not come.

JIRŌ (singing): Two mouthfuls and still death did not come.

TARŌ (singing): Three mouthfuls, four mouthfuls

JIRŌ (singing): Five mouthfuls

TARŌ (singing): More than ten mouthfuls

(They get up and begin to dance.)

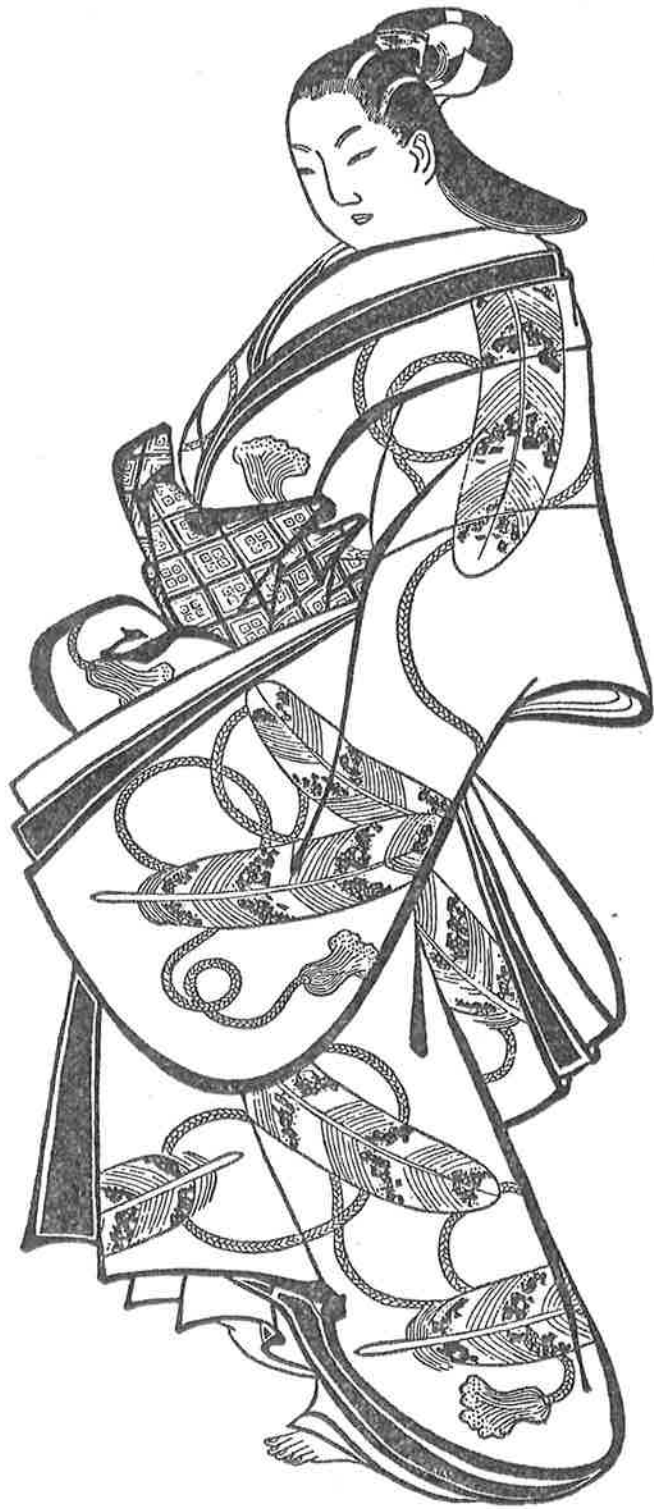
TOGETHER: (singing): We ate until there wasn't any left,
But still death came not, strange to tell,
Ah, what a clever head!

(They approach the Master while fanning, then suddenly strike him on the head with their fans. They run off laughing.)

MASTER: What do you mean "clever head"? You brazen things! Where are you going? Catch them! You won't get away with it! (He runs after them to the side.)

TOGETHER: Forgive us! Forgive us!

TRANSLATED BY DONALD KEENE



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