



**KABUKI-WEST**

**ACHILLES  
MACBETH  
RICHARD III**

**3 plays by  
KAREN  
SUNDE**

COVER Photo: copyright Juan Rodriguez-Torrent. "Witches 1 & 3." Paul Doniger's production at Pomperaug High School, CT. Witches Angelica Aconfora and Kristen Valera

### What the Critics Say

**MACBETH** resounds with Kabuki's passion, fascination. **KABUKI MACBETH** works. In fact, it works far better than one could have reasonably expected. ...Surprisingly enough, in Sunde's adaptation, the Zen philosophy seems engrained into the story, not imposed on top of it. ...the images prove striking...more and more frightening as Macbeth's lust for power turns into obsession and finally madness." Tom Jacobs L.A.DAILY NEWS

"The best of two worlds... fascinatingly enjoyable Sunde's writing fluctuates between direct, modern statement and poetic imagery...the play works very well. This is a terrific show." William Glackin SACRAMENTO BEE, OAKLAND TRIBUNE

**ACHILLES** "the *essence* of passion. Sunde's play, which compresses the Homeric epic into manageable proportions, is lucid and direct. ... The play...makes you see and hear with awakened eyes and ears." Clifford A Ridley THE PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER

"**ACHILLES** is a stunning production that succeeds on every level... it's moving as an antiwar statement, it's visually dazzling, and it crosses every chronological, national and gender boundary." Toby Zinman "Critic's Pick" PHILADELPHIA CITY PAPER

"...**OTHELLO**, with a superbly poetic, pared to the bone script by Karen Sunde that magically mixes Elizabethan warmth with haiku-like clarity has converted me. ...hypnotically beautiful, emotionally dizzying... It is a sinuous, flawless twining of dance, sound, and story. ...uses Shakespeare's basic story...adds new levels of complexity to the quintet of characters at its core. Hedy Weiss CHICAGO SUN-TIMES "...spare poetry...tells the story with economy...works very well with Sato's visual imagery." Richard Christiansen CHICAGO TRIBUNE

"Damn the cliches and full speed ahead. This is professional theater at its best. **KABUKI OTHELLO** is in almost every way possible a feast for the senses, and rendered so by an exquisitely realized three-sided collaboration of theater artisans. ... the impact...on the eye, the ear and the imagination is, in a word, stunning." Nels Nelson PHILADELPHIA DAILY NEWS

**KABUKI LADY MACBETH** "Sunde's script is very much about Lady Macbeth's loneliness and suppressed ambition as a woman in her society. ...a dazzling cultural hybrid, set to a beautifully distilled haiku-like script...a visual, physical and aural feast." Hedy Weiss CHICAGO SUN-TIMES. "Kabuki meets Shakespeare for magical Macbeth" Michael Phillips CHICAGO TRIBUNE

**TAGS:** Macbeth, Richard III, Achilles, Iliad, Thetis, experimental theatre, Shiva,

## **KABUKI-WEST**

### **Three Plays**

MACBETH + RICHARD III + ACHILLES

By

Karen Sunde

Conceived by Shozo Sato

Smashwords Edition

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## **INTRODUCTION**

You may know these stories, but what's Kabuki? Ka-bu-ki means song-dance-drama. To picture it, let the sparse words trigger your imagination with music, color, dance, action – simple or not – from a flutter of fabric on a bare stage to the sensory feast of Grand Kabuki, any sort of performance can tell these stories. The directions suggest one staging among the many an imaginative reader can conjure.

Though originally commissioned for professional American actors working in a Japanese tradition, thereafter ordinary college, high school, even grade school students have taken exuberant delight (with their audiences) in creating their own versions of Kabuki plays I've written.

Danny Fruchter, founder of Peoples Light and Theatre in Malvern Pennsylvania first asked me to collaborate with Shozo Sato, who had been creating Western classic/Kabuki hybrids in Illinois. For our initial production, Kabuki Othello, I introduced a convention from ancient Greek drama – the Chorus – which became a feature of Sato/Sunde works. Five such plays have been commissioned by four different producers. Kabuki Othello and Kabuki Lady Macbeth are published and available from: [www.dramaticpublishing.com](http://www.dramaticpublishing.com)

### **THESE THREE PLAYS**

Kabuki Macbeth and Kabuki Richard III are permeated with Japanese themes filtered through Shakespeare stories, but for Achilles, I drew from Homer's The Iliad and adjacent myths, so its themes are universal, straddling East and West.

Considering these three stories together yields the sad conclusion that “killing entertains us”. While we may lament that in our contemporary media entertainment killing is commonplace, have we noticed how few of our classics have no killing? Killing for power, in particular, ranks high. Now, it could be that cavemen entertained themselves with stories of killing for survival instead of for power, and it could be the 21<sup>st</sup> century will eventually embrace more wholesome entertainment, but for now...Macbeth, Richard III, and Achilles all deal with the elation (and consequences) of killing. Macbeth’s story is familiar, and Kabuki Macbeth holds to that story, merely simplifying, and viewing it through an Eastern prism.

Richard’s Kabuki story is more “played with,” and here’s why: If you track the labyrinthine blood-trail that history calls The Wars of the Roses, you may smile at Shakespeare’s litany of enemy Queens in his Act IV “until a Richard kill’d him” which seems to say “Figure this out if you want; but I’m telling my story.”

Shakespeare makes Richard III the embodiment of evil because he was the last king killed in those wars, and killed by a Tudor who was Elizabeth I’s grandfather. Hah-so! Given that he must be evil personified, Shozo Sato said Richard’s essence is like that of Shiva, Hindu god of creation/destruction, which it was my task to write, while limiting the cast as usual, so it seemed to me those bloody Queens, usually chopped, make a fertile field on which to play this play. And so we do. What emerged to a stunning degree was the hidden family drama that was always lurking there. Old Britain could make the Borgias blush.

With Achilles a drama had to be culled from an epic narrative and surrounding mythology – eg, the adventure of Achilles conception, his half god/half man dilemma. Spectacular Kabuki helped, as did the Chorus, and audiences from west to east seemed pleased. Achilles’ premiere was uniquely cross-cultural: in the ancient Greek amphitheater at Kourion in Cyprus an American acting company performed a Greek legend in the style of Japanese Kabuki.

## PRODUCTION HISTORY

**Kabuki Macbeth** was commissioned and produced by John Houseman’s The Acting Company in New York, and performed on tour across the United States. Later produced at the Krannert Center, University of Illinois, and at Virginia Commonwealth University.

**Kabuki Richard III** was commissioned by Actor’s Theatre of Louisville, but subsequent budget constraints prevented their planned production.

**Achilles: a Kabuki play** was commissioned to emerge from Danny Fruchter’s “The Iliad Project” at the People’s Light and Theatre Company. This drama with dance, based on The Iliad and related myths, was presented Kabuki-style. It premiered in the Greek amphitheater at Kourion, Cyprus, played People’s Light and Theatre, Wilma Theatre, and the Festival Mythos in Philadelphia, as well as touring Cyprus, Hungary, and Japan.

Book: **A Gathering of Actors:** The People's Light and Theatre Company in Cyprus and

Hungary, by Peter Carnahan chronicles that first tour, with **Achilles'** development and rehearsals in the ancient Greek amphitheater at Kourion.

A company led by Shozo Sato from the Krannert Center at the University of Illinois, Urbana, went on tour to make a "Kabuki Homecoming" in Japan demonstrating the Americans' embrace of an intricate Japanese art form.

### **PRODUCTION – Or How To Do These Plays**

You could call these plays "the song and dance of" Macbeth, Richard, Achilles; they resemble our musical theater. Performing Kabuki, the actors exaggerate and extend their voice tones, so the words must be simple, like lyrics, to facilitate clarity and foster an easy rapport with the audience.

In Kabuki performance, black-clad "Koken" are employed to change sets, manipulate props, perform any back-stage task in full view of the audience, scurrying as though invisible. I created my first Chorus by using Koken to perform that vital speaking role, and since then they tend to do double duty, and I call them "story-tellers who facilitate the action."

One of the Koken becomes the KI-PLAYER – who signals the opening of scenes and key moments by striking the "KI" (key) - wooden blocks - sharply, then in rapid succession, ending with three loud strikes to punctuate places where we might use a drum roll or a cymbal clash to say "ta-dah!" or here we go, or wasn't that something?

The "Mie" (mee-aye) pose, serves a similar purpose, but employs actors, instead of wooden blocks, It is an instant tableau the actor strikes, like a snapshot that says "got this?" In comedy, you could say we do a little Mie every time we do a comic "take" (reaction) toward the audience.

### **SETTINGS**

The action is written to flow on an open stage with minimal settings. A lightweight curtain, hand-drawn by Koken may be employed, or not. A forestage is useful. Moveable set elements – eg: flowing fabric panels that can drop; a screen; a platform for reclining or levels. Whatever is needed, the black-dressed, scurrying Koken arrange it, like invisible elves.

Lights, costumes, music – the more colorful and dramatic, the better. Kabuki saturates the senses. Let your imagination run riot: Action scenes may expand into production numbers. Mime and dance may be used to embellish description.

### **TALKING THE TALK**

**Making sense of the words:** Whether one character or several (Chorus) speak a sentence, the text is meant to flow like ordinary conversation, and to be as clear and direct – not artsy. Its arrangement on the page will help the actor make it easy. Technically, lines starting with a small letter mean the previous sentence is still going on. Lines starting with a capital letter mean a new sentence begins here. Ends of lines may signal a comma, a period, or none. As in life, the more fun you have with it, the better it works.

## KABUKI MACBETH

### PRODUCTION:

An open stage with a sliding screen or drape can suggest chamber. A low platform can be a settling or sleeping area. Shredded fabric, drawn or dropped in, can present a curtain-forest. Kimonos and armor are traditional, but the form invites experimentation.

CHARACTERS: 5 men, 4 women + Koken

WITCHES 1, 2, & 3

MACBETH

BANQUO, his friend

LADY MACBETH

MESSENGER

DONALBAIN, son of Duncan

DUNCAN, Shogun

MACDUFF, friend warrior

MALCOLM, son of Duncan

KOKEN, black-clad facilitators of the action

LADIES IN WAITING, LORDS, GHOSTS

DOUBLES: Messenger doubles as Macduff; Koken double as Lords, assassins; Witches double as Ladies in Waiting; all but the Macbeths double as Ghosts

## KABUKI MACBETH

**I i Forest.** *Witches appear slowly from behind mist curtains.*

**WITCHES**

Hear the roar  
howling  
following whine  
From where?  
From where?

No wind  
No smell of storm  
A tree drips cold  
The sky is down

Comes the roar  
howling  
following whine  
From where?  
From there

.  
Now  
in the still  
far below—  
Yes  
The quiet shirr  
of steel  
of steel. of steel  
slicing flesh

.  
*(Burst of howling and whine)*

.  
Hoo ooo  
Aii eee  
Thick dew oozing  
bone scrapes bone  
from mud they gape  
no breath they take

.  
They stop the wind  
The sky will not wake  
Hoo ooo  
Aii eee

.  
Hush  
Here comes one rising  
Crack – through the trees  
rushing along

.  
Hush, Hush, Hush  
Hear him coming  
leaping the earth  
Let go the song:

.  
*(They begin their dance)*

.  
We come  
from lonely reaches

to hang  
in freezing mist

Round and round  
the spinning whir  
forth and back  
the line will purr

Fulfilling the cycle  
now rise and now fall  
none can escape it  
we ride one and all

Bound each to all others  
and all  
to the wheel  
of Karma  
Ha ahhh (*Shrieking laugh*)

*(Banquo from off, calls—)*

**BANQUO:** Macbeth!

**WITCHES**

Ha ahh!  
Round and round  
the spinning whir  
forth and back  
the line will purr...

**BANQUO:** (*Off, calling*) Macbeth

*(Macbeth enters, fresh from a bath. Witches echo from concealment)*

**WITCHES:** Macbeth, Macbeth, Macbeth...

**MACBETH**

I climb as though  
without my legs  
gliding from rock  
to ledge

*(Bellowing, from pleasure of climb)*

Ho-oooh!

*(Banquo enters, filthy from battle)*

**BANQUO**

Macbeth!

They said you left  
to cross the mountain  
You must have risen  
with the wind  
What, have you bathed?

**MACBETH**

In springs that steam  
between the rocks  
bubbling hot  
They heal

**BANQUO**

You stand there  
pure as a babe

**MACBETH:** And you are tired?

**BANQUO**

Of course I am!  
Battle fever  
feeds you still  
Soon as you cool  
you'll groan

**MACBETH** *(Laughs, bellows)* Ho-oh

**BANQUO:** I've brought great news!

**MACBETH:** Ho – oooh!

**BANQUO**

Go on – yes, bellow!

I saw you far  
across the field  
Twenty to one

they had you close  
they bore you down  
and then  
your sword began to swing

Still sweeping till reaching  
the traitor himself  
Kurokawa  
Your arm rose and fell  
He was gone  
in the swell...  
the mighty tyrant

What seized you?  
How did you feel?

**MACBETH**

I felt...nothing  
I had no plan  
no worry  
no...nothing

The sword  
was my arm  
was my heart  
I was...nothing

**BANQUO:** You felt nothing!

**MACBETH**

Something still  
something small  
a power so sure  
and such an ease  
no more  
than falling into sleep

**BANQUO** (*Laughs*)

You won't sleep long  
when you learn  
why I've come

**WITCHES**

Macbeth...  
Macbeth...  
Macbeth...

**BANQUO:** Oh! You have admirers here?

**MACBETH:** What are they?

**WITCHES**

Blessings, Macbeth  
Blessings...  
Blessings...

**BANQUO** *(To Witches)*

Move on  
There's nothing for you here  
but blood and battle sweat

**MACBETH**

They look like phantoms  
in the mist

**BANQUO:** Macbeth, it's time for rewards!

**WITCHES**

Macbeth  
great Lord of Kurokawa

**MACBETH** *(To Witches)*

Lucky try  
but far shot  
for he's dead  
I'm Takatori

**BANQUO**

No!  
That's what I came to say!  
You're Kurokawa too  
How could these women know?  
You have his title now

Mountain wizards  
is what they are

MACBETH: I have his title?

WITCHES

Feed the line slowly  
no loose curl remains

BANQUO

Yes. Kurokawa's  
And his land

WITCHES

Wind it and whirl it  
Don't tangle the skein

MACBETH: I'm...Kurokawa?

BANQUO

Yes!  
Now you have reason  
to bellow

WITCHES: Round and Round...

MACBETH: What are they muttering?

WITCHES: the spinning whir...

BANQUO: They hit one fortune right

WITCHES: forth and back...

BANQUO

No doubt they want  
to be employed

WITCHES: the line will purr

BANQUO: The Shogun...

MACBETH: is riding after?

BANQUO: Right away

MACBETH: I must—

WITCHES

Follow the thread  
Take hold of the line

MACBETH: Get word to my wife

WITCHES

We weave  
and you climb  
Hand over hand  
up sheer rock  
you glide  
Take hold of tomorrow  
Let Karma guide

MACBETH (*Angry*)

Hah—  
you claim to be Fate?  
No!

You may see  
something in the future  
there are ways  
but what I am  
and what I do  
are mine to say

Why else do I live a man?  
Should I mark  
the tracks you plot—  
a chalk-footed rat?

When I'm done  
you may chart my way  
and call it Karma  
Until then  
I will make the turns  
and call it me!

BANQUO

What's wrong?  
Make peace  
They're harmless creatures

**MACBETH:** We've stayed too long

**BANQUO**

Aha. Your blood has cooled  
Your wounds begin to feel

**WITCHES**

Takatori  
who is Kurokawa  
will be more:

Shogun

*(Like an echo, overlapping)*

Shogun

Shogun

is the title  
for Macbeth

**BANQUO:** Oho, do you hear?

**MACBETH** *(To himself)*

No

It's in the air

My name

has become so strong

**BANQUO**

If he

is to be Shogun...

don't be sly with me

Grandmother

tell my fortune too

**WITCHES**

Blessings Banquo

Blessings

Blessings Banquo

**BANQUO**

They know me as well!  
Or did you name me?  
Did you call me Banquo?

**WITCHES:** Out and again...

**MACBETH** (*to himself*): My name is in the air...

**WITCHES:** the spinning whir...

**MACBETH**  
where these bold women  
can snatch it down...

**WITCHES:** forth and back...

**MACBETH**  
to weave their after-tale  
of Karma

**WITCHES**  
the line will purr:  
He is Shogun  
but you are  
the father of many  
Shogun  
Many

**BANQUO**  
Father of Shogun  
Now that's better!  
Which would you rather  
my friend—  
get it alone  
or roll many sheets  
in the getting?

*(Witches disappear)*

**MACBETH** (*To himself*)  
My name is in the air  
I put it there

**BANQUO**

Friend Takatori  
who is Kurokawa—  
are you here?  
But laugh  
it's no more than a game

**MACBETH:** Where did they go?

**BANQUO**

Oop  
Bad sign  
They dropped their prey  
They may be here  
and still not seen

**MACBETH:** Come

**BANQUO**

Yes  
Let's go down  
This air  
is far too thin  
for mortal men

*(Laughter of Witches echoing)*

**I ii Foliage out. Shoji screens revealed. Lady Macbeth is seen behind open shoji screens.**

**LADY MACBETH**

Waiting is not easy  
but wait is what I do  
day to night  
year to year  
waking only  
by his light  
when my husband comes

On the quiet side  
of passion  
I fill my valleys up  
blending deepens  
foaming spills

until he comes  
to draw his cup

*(Messenger enters, shown in by Lady in Waiting)*

**LADY IN WAITING**

I wish to speak  
with you  
dear Lady  
There is one who breathes  
all red-faced  
running  
from our Lord  
Will you hear him?

*(Lady Macbeth nods. Messenger does a mime-dance relating the battle)*

**MESSENGER**

Honored Lady Macbeth

I saw your Lord  
in battle  
saw from far  
across the field  
Twenty to one  
they had him close  
they bore him down  
and then his sword  
began to swing

The twenty went down  
two, three to an arc  
while his blade swept on  
whipping chimes  
on the wind  
straight into sleet-driving arrows  
One sped toward his neck  
met his blade, lightning-fast  
too fast for the thunder  
that followed

Macbeth's horse staggered  
beneath him

He slid free to the ground  
Then a ball studded with spikes  
spun on a chain to greet him  
seeking his arm  
leg or neck to entwine  
so it's partnering blade  
could sickle  
that part from his whole

Then – I saw it  
I swear, with these eyes–  
Macbeth leapt from the ground  
arcing through air  
like the wind-god  
howling a loud “Kurokawa!”

Then that mountainous traitor  
blackened the sky  
Kurokawa loomed  
great as his crime  
breathing the flame of disaster  
belching a laugh-after-roar  
he nodded to flick  
the challenge away

Then he drove at Macbeth  
with his seven foot spear  
like an avalanche hurtling down  
Macbeth stood still  
watching the giant spear come  
One lift of his arm  
it was shattered  
ice cracked in Spring  
hacked-instant in pieces  
it fell to the foot of Macbeth

One last sweep – Kurokawa stood headless  
A spurting blood fountain  
shot up instead

*(Messenger has finished his dance. Bows and addresses Lady Macbeth)*

Great honors race

behind this deed  
Prepare your joy  
Our hero comes  
with titles fresh  
Your own Macbeth  
is new Lord Kurokawa

**LADY MACBETH:** Kurokawa!

*(Her cry of astonished pleasure, then she is immediately demure again. The Messenger delivers a letter to the lady in waiting, which she, in turn delivers to Lady Macbeth, who reads it, then—)*

**LADY MACBETH**

Wild women  
Sang out from the rocks

Avert your eyes  
so joy may hide  
her shameless face

Go  
give order for  
the greatest feast  
our fields can raise  
The Shogun comes tonight

*(Messenger bows and exits. Lady Macbeth takes a prayerful stance – palms out to receive)*

**LADY MACBETH**

Wild women in the mist  
I open to you now  
Let power pour into me  
Let desire  
turn ripe flesh  
to hot steel  
I become  
the pure tool  
of my will  
The Shogun comes tonight

*(Witches enter, dance round Lady Macbeth, transforming her into a puppet)*

**WITCHES**

You are ready  
and you know the way  
you feel the moment join  
lives in motion  
souls are met  
actions lap  
against a net  
of time

Your time is now  
Prepare to kill  
To kill?  
Prepare to kill

Tomorrow takes you  
higher than you dream  
and knowing  
rises in your throat  
that all is yours  
and his  
if you only  
have the skill  
and if you only choose  
to kill

**I iia Macbeth enters.** *The witches depart. As soon as she sees him, Lady Macbeth bows.*

**LADY MACBETH** *(Teasing)*

When great Takatori  
crept from my bed  
who would expect  
I'd have to accept  
bold Kurokawa  
in his stead

**MACBETH:** You'll have to take them both

**LADY MACBETH:** As my Lord wills

*(Excited, they meet with an embrace or sign of passion)*

**MACBETH**

The sword of Tao was mine

so pure my mastery  
it shattered the air

**LADY MACBETH**

All you've done  
is no more  
than I knew  
you could do

Your new title  
is but one  
from Shogun

**MACBETH**

Wild women sang out  
from the rocks  
as though emerging out of me—  
“Macbeth will be Shogun”

**LADY MACBETH:** They sang the truth!

**MACBETH:** It was my mind that spoke

**LADY MACBETH:** Your Karma

**MACBETH**

No  
They were nothing  
but hags on the wind

**LADY MACBETH**

The power  
of your fate  
grows within me  
Duncan comes to declare  
you his heir

**MACBETH:** Tonight it will be

**LADY MACBETH**

The moment he names you  
chimes a bell

**MACBETH**  
My life begins  
How may we shorten his?

**LADY MACBETH**  
You've brought him  
under my roof  
I'm ready  
my love, to serve

**MACBETH:** Tonight he names me his heir

**LADY MACBETH**  
So well  
will I play your mate  
tomorrow, when sun  
floods your pillow  
a new Shogun wakes

**I iii Screens part revealing banquet hall.** *Procession begins: Macbeth and Lady Macbeth position themselves as welcoming hosts. Warriors, including Banquo, Macduff, Malcolm and Donalbain enter and take their places. Shogun Duncan is saluted, takes his central place. Duncan nods, and Donalbain begins to speak)*

**DONALBAIN**  
As younger son  
and least among you  
I speak for my father  
the Shogun Duncan

His happiness  
a once dry well  
now brims beyond  
its upmost rim  
The rot  
that sucked him dry  
has been removed

We thank Macbeth  
who now bears titles  
of the traitor  
that he slew  
called Kurokawa

My lord Macduff—  
please tell the tale  
as first you did

**MACDUFF**

Many saw  
but none explained  
his action  
Magic  
is what it was

*(Other warriors pound floor, and make vocal sign of agreement)*

**BANQUO**

Macduff's misled  
It takes no special skill  
to strike down traitors

**MACDUFF**

I am ready to wager  
all I hold dear—  
He struck with power  
that was divine

**DUNCAN:** You all mistake

*(All are startled, and turn obediently to hear the Shogun)*

**DUNCAN:** Macbeth went mad

*(All look to one another. Duncan speaks to Macbeth—)*

**DUNCAN**

Come forth honored host  
When you raised your sword  
did you intend  
to murder Kurokawa?

**MACBETH:** No, my Shogun

**DUNCAN**

Did you strike to win  
to wear the praise

and titles you now bear

**MACBETH:** No

**DUNCAN:** Did you do it out of fear

**MACBETH:** I did not

**DUNCAN**

No

You lost yourself  
gave up your mind

**MACBETH:** Great Shogun...

**DUNCAN** *(To warriors)*

The sword  
of the samurai  
is his soul  
a sword pure-cast  
of honor  
Desires of self  
constrain it  
Only emptiness will serve  
To be at one with all  
he must be nothing

Macbeth broke through  
his mind  
and loosed  
its hidden power  
Such perfection  
we do not gain  
to kill  
but it can punish evil

**MACBETH:** I am unworthy

**DUNCAN**

You are blessed  
May you continue so  
dear cousin

**DUNCAN**

Now  
while my joy flows...

*(Macbeth speaks low to Lady Macbeth)*

**MACBETH:** Our plan is monstrous

**DUNCAN**

While we bask in favor  
with the universal powers  
let us turn the Shogunate:  
I will name my heir

*(Excited murmur among the Lords)*

Step forth  
away from your brother  
away from boys' concerns  
Come forth my son  
Come...Malcolm

*(All stir, surprised. Lady Macbeth drops her fan. Malcolm moves center)*

**BANQUO:** Why does he name this limp twig?

**MACDUFF:** Do not question the Shogun.

**DUNCAN**

Malcolm  
You are still  
a Lord in training  
but as time comes round  
I will raise you  
to the weight of Shogun  
Will you serve?

**MALCOLM:** I will give my self and soul

**DUNCAN**

Go forth, my son  
Receive salute

*(Malcolm steps forward. All bow to him,)*

**ALL**

We pledge to serve  
in his turn  
Lord Malcolm

**LADY MACBETH**

Come  
Let's dance in celebration

*(Lady Macbeth rises to meet her Ladies-in-Waiting as they file in and begin to dance for the company. Her focus is on Macbeth as he turns, dazed, away from the dancing)*

**BANQUO** *(To Macbeth)*

Were the mountain hags mistaken?  
Your name and Shogun  
do not mix tonight

*(Macbeth stumbles forward. Dance goes on behind him)*

**MACBETH**

Why Malcolm?  
Why did he name Malcolm  
On the mountain  
it was all so clear  
I knew that it would be

*(Lady Macbeth leaves the dancing, moves slowly toward him)*

**MACBETH**

Kurokawa  
I knew he'd say  
and now  
I answer to that name

My heart flew up  
Where is the joy I felt?  
Why can't I feel it now  
when I hear 'Kurokawa'

It's ringing cold  
because—

there was another word  
and that was Shogun  
I would be Shogun

**LADY MACBETH:** You leave the feast?

*(Macbeth startled she is there, but bold—)*

**MACBETH:** This changes all

**LADY MACBETH:** It changes nothing

**MACBETH**

A samurai lives for honor  
Look— *(Indicating Duncan)*  
He sits enrapt in goodness

**LADY MACBETH**

And drives a dagger  
into your vassal's back

**MACBETH**

He is my Lord!  
I gut my bowels  
and yours  
if harm should come to him

**LADY MACBETH:** And who is Macbeth?

**MACBETH:** Vassal to the Shogun

**LADY MACBETH:** You...

**MACBETH:** Enough!

**I iiiia** *Witch draws curtain to create space for the Macbeths in private.*

**LADY MACBETH**

Where has it gone  
my love?

When last you came within  
my chamber door

you wore  
a royal helmet  
It blazoned  
in the firelight  
of your conquering eye  
You topped the world

Don't tell me now  
to sleep with less

**MACBETH:** Be still!

**LADY MACBETH**  
How will you still me—  
with my grave?!

I am yourself  
We, two forces  
wound to one  
I cry aloud  
what your heart pounds  
but cannot pound  
to silence

**MACBETH**  
You feel it well...  
but do not know  
the world of deeds

**LADY MACBETH**  
Did I dream  
wild women?

This day  
your life erupted  
into glory  
Remember it!

**MACBETH** (*Quietly, excited*)  
The world was mine  
I felt the future  
rising  
in the mountain air

**LADY MACBETH**

To catch it  
takes a man

I am your inside self  
who cannot live  
outside the house  
that you provide  
If you are not a man  
then who am I!

I promise you  
this feeble frame  
on which is hung a woman  
has steeled itself so far  
that I could do this thing  
alone

All parts that man and woman are  
will blend in time  
reverse in space  
to serve you  
Shall I strike?

**MACBETH**

Come—  
the spirit I feel now  
will lift me beyond nature  
I'll top the world  
with you my bride  
my samurai  
So step into the dance!

*(Bouyed, they dance, or strike a triumphant tableau)*

**I iv** **Curtain opens to reveal front of King Duncan's bedroom, closed sliding shoji doors;**  
*where Macbeth sits alone, meditating.*

**MACBETH**

The moon will climb  
behind the bending willow  
The dark pool gleams

in sleep

*(Magnificent sword suddenly dangles in air, suspended from long bamboo pole held by Koken.  
They or Witches manipulate it as it floats, teasingly guiding Macbeth to Duncan's room)*

**MACBETH** *(Seeing sword)*

Why are you here?  
What do you want with me?  
Go away  
cease to be!

Oh gods, you're bright—  
you soul of samurai:  
Swing gaily on a cherry bough  
Bloom in my boyhood dream  
My spirit streams in yours  
unmoved and pure...

*(He reaches for the sword, but it eludes him, slipping just out of reach)*

You dare me!

**WITCHES** *(Quietly, luring him)*

Feel the blade  
bending soft core  
sliver edge  
beaten white  
You cannot steam-slice stone  
alone

**MACBETH** *(To sword)*

Your slender hilt without me aches  
what my mind can fashion  
my hand can reach  
with this arm  
This arm is your mate!

*(He lunges for the sword; it evades him again)*

**WITCHES**

Ash and ore  
beat it pure  
beat beat

twice ten  
thrice ten  
pure of the pure

Heat Heat  
heat from flame  
to the white  
of a midsummer moon  
Heat it white

**MACBETH**

Yes  
when it's white  
my strong heart  
longing to burst  
thrusts my flesh  
to the core of the fire!

The samurai  
will use his sword  
only in service  
of his Lord

*(Burst of Witches' laughter—)*

**WITCHES:** Hoo ooo Aii eee

**MACBETH** *(Angry)*

I lie, you say?  
Do I lie?  
My Lord is Shogun  
so where is the lie?  
The moment we join  
that moment it's done  
mighty Duncan will die  
My Lord is Shogun  
But the Shogun is I!

*(He goes confidently after the sword. Macbeth follows the sword, grabs it. Witch opens sliding door, other Witches push Macbeth into room, close door behind him)*

*(Duncan's shadow appears on the screen, and Macbeth's shadow with the sword, then the fight between them goes on in silhouetted shadow. As the instant Duncan is wounded, red blood splashes over the white sliding doors.)*

*(Duncan breaks through sliding door, all red with blood-matted hair. Long red trousers may indicate a profusion of blood flow. Stylized dance-battle between Macbeth and Duncan until Duncan is killed.)*

**MACBETH** *(Breathless)*

He stayed apart.  
I don't know why  
The blade refused to swing  
My arm  
that used to be as nothing  
hung like lead

**WITCHES**

Poor Samurai  
killed his sword  
Is it dead?

**MACBETH**

My ease was gone  
had run  
I don't know why  
it was so hard  
to make him die  
but now it's done

*(Witches creep toward him, but keep a distance)*

**WITCHES**

It's done  
Macbeth  
It's spun  
Your honor is gone *(Echo overlaps)*  
Your honor is gone  
Your honor is gone

*(Witches begin Noh Lion Dance in which they escort Lady Macbeth on stage)*

**LADY MACBETH:** Why...do you have the sword!

**MACBETH:** It's done

**LADY MACBETH**

Why do you have the sword?  
Take it in

**MACBETH:** I've won

**LADY MACBETH**  
Take it in  
It must stay beside him  
Take it in  
Lay it there

**MACBETH:** The bell—

**LADY MACBETH**  
There is no bell  
Go!  
Before someone comes

**MACBETH:** It's done

**LADY MACBETH**  
So  
this is the bold face  
of battle?

**MACBETH:** I...

**LADY MACBETH**  
Is this  
your blood-tasting  
ecstasy?

**MACBETH:** I won't go

**LADY MACBETH:** Give it to me!

*(She takes the sword and enters the room. Macbeth lifts his head, sensing something. Her shadow is seen moving inside the room)*

**WITCHES**  
So easily  
a point of steel  
slips into the skin

so easily  
a drop  
will slide to fill  
the puncture

O foolish man  
who slits the membrane  
holding life  
For from  
one giddy drop  
of blood  
will spread a stain  
that grows  
that swells  
into a never ending flood  
of pain

*(Lady Macbeth emerges with blood-covered hands and robe)*

**LADY MACBETH**

The smell...  
is thick  
floats into eyes  
The smell itself  
chokes breath  
The smell  
sticks

*(She looks at her hand, slowly tastes blood. She begins blood dance. Bells begin)*

**MACBETH**

Hear the bell?  
Who struck...  
released the beam  
that struck  
the bell

The boom  
That doesn't rise  
it flows along the ground  
it shudders  
from the sleeping vault of unknown sound  
it rumbles

through my flesh  
and strums the bone  
it penetrates  
too desolate to pray  
another day  
another life has come

I make our fate

*(Witches wild laughter)*

**END OF ACT ONE**

## **ACT TWO**

**II i Front of curtain. Malcolm and Donalbain** *face each other from opposite ends of the stage. They are numb with shock and grief.*

**MALCOLM:** Donalbain....

**DONALBAIN:** Malcolm...

**MALCOLM:** Our father...

**DONALBAIN:** Our father's dead

*(They turn out toward audience)*

**DONALBAIN:** How can it...

**MALCOLM:** How did...

**DONALBAIN:** Macbeth has said...

**MALCOLM**

He said  
he killed the ones  
who did the crime

**DONALBAIN**

Yes  
Macbeth has said

What can we do

**MALCOLM:** Our father's dead

**DONALBAIN:** I fear for you.

**MALCOLM:** We both must fly

**DONALBAIN:** But not we two together

**MALCOLM**

How could our joy  
dissolve

**DONALBAIN**

We wore it fresh  
as nighttime dew

**MALCOLM**

How could we know  
the glory of our father  
had already set—  
blazing  
with the scarlet sun

**DONALBAIN**

My brother  
take my hand  
You must take care

**MALCOLM:** And so must you

**DONALBAIN**

I'll help you all I can  
but we must fly

**MALCOLM**

And not we two  
together

**DONALBAIN:** No

**MALCOLM**

Take my sword  
as myself  
to protect you

**DONALBAIN**

Take mine  
so my spirit  
goes with you

**MALCOLM**

I'll cross the water  
to the island Kyushu

**DONALBAIN:** I'll go past mountains

**MALCOLM**

Home has no help  
for Shogun's sons  
where Shogun's beds  
are butchery

*(They exit in opposite directions)*

**II ii Banquet hall. Macbeth dressed in golden armor. Nobles warriors attend him. All very still. Responses are correct, but there is reluctance, not enthusiasm.**

**WARRIOR**

Let all our voices  
pledge once more  
in this election

**BANQUO:** Who should it be but Macbeth?

**ALL**

Macbeth  
Macbeth  
Macbeth!

**WARRIOR**

For our Shogun  
a deep salute

*(All salute Macbeth appropriately, together. Witches then approach him ceremoniously with a*

*great antlered helmet. They crown him with it.)*

**WITCHES**

You wear the power  
of a mighty stag  
He lords the forest  
with his will  
But when the cycle  
of the year is up  
he finds his glory shed  
his forehead light  
his thicket filled

*(Macbeth stands in triumph. Lady Macbeth signals)*

**LADY MACBETH:** Come. Let the dance begin.

*(But no dance begins. Instead, Witches cluster around Macbeth. Others, repelled, back away)*

**MACBETH**

Macduff—  
You have wish to retire?

**MACDUFF**

I go  
to gather my men  
to make you secure

*(Macduff exits as Lady Macbeth speaks)*

**LADY MACBETH**

Our honored friends  
excuse  
the quiet celebration  
The preparations...  
wearied me

*(Banquo emits a tight laugh as he backs away)*

**BANQUO**

So, my friend  
you are Shogun  
Sooner than we could have dreamed

our mountain hags  
were tried – and won  
Could it be do you suppose  
I should look  
to making sons?

**LADY MACBETH:** What does he mean

*(Banquo exits. Macbeth gestures sharply; Kuroko – Koken as assassins – surround him)*

**MACBETH**  
After him  
and end his life

*(Kuroko exit swiftly after Banquo)*

**MACBETH**  
End the father  
end the sons

No flower will bloom  
without a seed  
without the source  
no stream will feed  
There's none  
can wheel me  
to the ground

**WITCHES**  
Never fear  
You will not fall  
till the forest  
comes down from high mountain  
for none who bears  
the sword of man  
can harm Macbeth

**MACBETH**  
Do you hear  
my love  
none who bears  
the sword of man  
can harm Macbeth

We are free!

**WITCHES**

Only take care of Macduff

Macduff (*Echoing*)

Macduff

He toys with you

and he's run

to serve young Malcolm

**MACBETH**

He's run

to young Malcolm

Whatever for?

To play at bouncing balls?

*(Macbeth gestures sharply as before. Kuroko respond and exit just as another Kuroko enters with a bag dripping red. Kuroko displays a severed head to them)*

**MACBETH**

Run after

Now my love

Who do you see?

**LADY MACBETH** (*Stonily, dazed*)

Your friend Banquo

His head

**MACBETH**

My friend Banquo's

come down

from high mountain

Shall we celebrate?

**LADY MACBETH**

Come

Let's to bed

**MACBETH**

They all

are jealous of me

Macduff!!

Magic

is what I was  
he said

Macduff  
is a shivering reed  
who's seen  
the steel of my arm  
so let him snivel and run  
What is he good for  
but making sons  
*(Laughing, echoes himself)*  
but making sons  
but making Sons

**LADY MACBETH**

Come  
we cannot live  
without the veil  
of sleep

**MACBETH**

Oh no  
I must be awake  
There's much to do  
when you're making Fate

*(Kuroko enter with larger red dripping bag and dump it, displaying, at Lady Macbeth's feet, the bloodied heads of Lady Macduff and her two children.)*

**LADY MACBETH**

The Lady Macduff?

And all her little ones

I'm tired  
come with me  
come...

*(Witches surround them, laughing. Macbeth and Lady Macbeth stand center, with heads spread before them. **Mie pose of all**)*

**II iii The forest.** *Lady Macbeth lies asleep. Macbeth sits over her.*

**MACBETH**

Softly  
you drop the veil  
of sleep  
while I  
remain outside  
To grow  
defenseless so  
cannot be  
not with me

But is it soft- ?  
The day is gone  
new blood runs clear  
you wake newborn  
while I  
am still as stone  
my mind propped wide  
to hinder monstrous things  
who crowd the day  
the night the time between  
until I am  
as they

*(He weeps then howls like a beast. Lady Macbeth stirs)*

**LADY MACBETH:** He's asleep. Come

**MACBETH:** Who?

**LADY MACBETH**

No screaming  
Hush...  
We still can play  
Come—

*(She mimes playing ball with head of small child)*

Little, little head  
roll it  
roll to me  
little toss  
shiny curls

tumble  
roll to me

Oh-oh bumped his nose  
no no – it bleeds  
thick  
wipe it quick  
it bleeds

**MACBETH**

Your hands are clean.  
Stop...stop

*(She notices him as though for the first time)*

**LADY MACBETH**

What, have you bathed?  
You stand there pure...

*(Affectionately, she moves to examine him, but finds that he has bathed in blood)*

...from steaming springs  
but thick  
bubbling hot  
and thick  
it sticks  
the smell...

*(The smell is nauseating)*

**MACBETH:** You're asleep. Wake up!

**LADY MACBETH**

Three little children  
all undone  
One two three  
then we  
have none

**MACBETH:** You're dreaming. Come...

**LADY MACBETH**

Kill

kill the Shogun  
Ah – oop  
here's another

**MACBETH:** Be still!

**LADY MACBETH**

Slice him slick  
hack him quick  
See how they run  
After the brothers

**MACBETH:** Wake up! You'll be heard

**LADY MACBETH**

The smell  
is thick  
It chokes the eyes  
Ahhmm  
Are you afraid  
to play?

**MACBETH:** Come...you must wake

*(He leads her)*

**MACBETH** *(Calling)*

Women wild  
upon the mountain  
Macbeth is calling  
Come!

*(Witches gather)*

**WITCHES:** Who is calling– come!

**MACBETH:** You have done this!

**WITCHES**

Great Lord Takatori  
Kurokawa  
Shogun?

**MACBETH**

Help her!  
She believed you  
from the first

**WITCHES**

Macbeth—  
great ruler of the world  
what more  
do you require?

**MACBETH**

We ask for cure:  
I want to see  
those gone before

*(Ghosts of those Macbeth has killed begin to gather, Banquo and Duncan among them)*

**WITCHES**

Come, come, come  
from lonely reaches  
where you hang in freezing mist  
Come  
sing him the song  
of his life string  
wind out the line  
of his days  
unfold the role  
that he plays

**MACBETH:** I do not fear you. Come

**BANQUO**

No, you—  
come with me  
I'll show you  
battlefields a-rot  
with steaming limbs  
in every brilliant gash  
a tongue a voice that screams:  
“Take Macbeth  
It was him”

*(Macbeth strikes, trying to fight ghosts that slither away from him)*

**MACBETH**

Back to hell  
and let us be  
This time is mine  
it was made for me

**DUNCAN**

I weep, Macbeth  
Your honor  
a lifetime winning  
was in a moment lost

Man's glory  
is a time  
of high danger  
Desire is obsession  
Obsession loses all

Follow fast, Macbeth

*(Macbeth fights more furiously)*

**DUNCAN**

Desire is obsession  
Obsession loses all

*(Lady Macbeth is surrounded, willingly, without offering resistance, being strangled by ghosts)*

**LADY MACBETH**

Macbeth...  
Macbeth  
Let go my soul...

*(Macbeth tries to fight ghosts who surround her. They part for him. She is dead.)*

**MACBETH** *(Quietly)*

I am yourself  
she said  
We—  
two forces wound  
to one

*(Pause. Then speaks to her)*

You should have come  
astride me to the field  
then you'd have known  
what life is  
and how it wets the ground

Well then, come down  
from high mountain!  
It's time  
that forests came down  
I stand here  
Come root-tearing down!  
If all grace deserts me  
I'm left as I am  
Come crush me  
I stand here  
stark man!

*(Macduff appears)*

**MACBETH**  
Stand clear Macduff  
I have killing  
to do  
My hand will bleach day  
to forever

**MACDUFF**  
After death  
it may  
But you have cleared  
the earth  
of mine  
I stand alone  
No day comes  
until you're gone

**MACBETH**  
Aha  
if you can

I am never to die  
by any who bears  
the sword of man

**MACDUFF**

Die now  
for I feel nothing  
The sword  
is my arm  
is my heart  
I am nothing

**MACBETH:** No!

**MACDUFF**

Do you fear me now?  
The sword I hold  
is not of man  
It is my soul  
It is honor

I am air  
I am rock  
I am you  
I am all things

**MACBETH:** No

**MACDUFF**

I have no desire  
I am ready to die  
You are mine

*(They fight. Macbeth is killed, beheaded. His bloody head is speared atop a pike.)  
(Macduff in Mie pose)*

**II iiii Witches take Macbeth's head in their arms, move downstage.**

**WITCHES**

Hoo ooo  
Aii eee  
Great Takatori  
Kurokawa – Shogun

What has become of you?  
What did you make him do?  
It wasn't I  
Nor either me  
Did someone lie?  
Did he believe?  
Or did he choose  
what he would choose  
to do

.  
Great Takatori  
Kurokawa – Shogun  
Who did he cry to  
that moment  
that last  
What had he left  
to gain  
Parched wind is all  
that remains

.  
It wasn't I  
Nor either me  
Did someone lie?  
Did he believe  
Or did he choose  
what he would choose  
to do

.  
Peace, now – be still  
These things  
are best unknown  
Find peace  
Over-glory  
in the heart  
will rot  
and ripple through  
the arc of time  
but clean  
replenished peace  
can reign  
when man  
his selfish way  
resigns

**II iv Banquet hall. Malcolm seated on throne, center. Donalbain, Macduff, other noblemen seated. Celebration dance by Ladies-in-Waiting is in progress.**

**MACDUFF**

Joy to you  
great Shogun Malcolm  
Smile on us now  
Be as the sun  
when it carelessly floods  
the high mountain

We turn to you  
longing for warmth  
and pray  
for the end  
of dark days  
Bless us now

**MALCOLM**

Macduff  
my noble samurai  
I thank you and promise  
to you and all  
who pledge faith to me—  
eternal peace  
a peace to the end  
from now until  
the seas rise and blend  
with the skies

So let us taste joy  
and pass it to each  
and ask that together  
we raise  
loud thanks  
to this breaking day  
Let your voices blaze!

**ALL:** *(Loud)* Ay ay yah!

**WITCHES**

Come put your shoulder to the wheel

Come set the wheel  
to spin  
Just let tomorrow roll away  
the wheel won't stop  
the wheel won't stay  
Today's the day you win

Donalbain (*Echoing*)  
Donalbain  
Donalbain...  
Why is it Malcolm?  
Why not you?  
Why is the first-born  
always first  
Why must you stand behind  
always on tiptoe  
trying to glimpse  
parading life  
through your brother's prime

**DONALBAIN**  
The seed  
was not less potent  
that shaped my royal line  
The earth is left  
much finer that's plowed a second time  
Why is it Malcolm?  
Why not me?  
This thorn  
has snagged my pride  
for I am just as bright  
and just as royal born

**WITCHES** (*Weaving around him*)  
Follow the thread  
Take hold of the line  
We weave  
and you climb  
Hand over hand  
up sheer rock  
you glide  
Take hold of tomorrow  
Let Karma guide

**DONALBAIN** *(Excited)* I can be Shogun!!

*(Witches offer two outcomes – the phrases may be mixed, or spoken at once, in opposition)*

**WITCHES 1**

Hush! Hush...  
Fulfilling your cycle  
now rise and now fall  
none can escape it  
we ride one and all  
bound each to all others  
and all  
to the wheel  
of Karma  
bound each to all others  
and all  
to the wheel  
of Fate

**WITCHES 2**

But is it real?  
And are you bound?  
Or is it chance  
he wins, you lose?  
Or do you dance  
the step you choose

Decide–  
Do you believe?  
But excuse us–  
while we weave

**END OF PLAY**

**KABUKI RICHARD III**

**PRODUCTION:**

An open or proscenium stage to allow fluid transitions. Excess of color and beauty.  
A light-weight curtain to be whisked open is customary, not essential.

**CHARACTERS:** 5 men, 5 women, Koken 2-6

*Extended character backgrounds are given for those who wish to follow the feud. For “Shogun,” substitute “King,” for “Shogun’s Lady,” “Queen”*

.  
MARGARET (of Anjou) – former Shogun’s Lady (of Henry VI), ruthless

.  
RICHARD – brother of dead Shogun (Edward IV), Protector to Shogun’s heir, ambitious

.  
HASTINGS – Chief Lord to dead Shogun, faithful

.  
BUCKINGHAM – Lord, serves Richard, ambitious

.  
ELIZABETH – new widow; former Shogun’s Lady (of Edward IV), ripe

.  
RIVERS – Elizabeth’s brother, Lord, Uncle to heir

.  
GREY – Elizabeth’s brother, Lord, Uncle to heir

.  
YORK – Mother of Richard & dead Shogun, widow of Richard of York

.  
BETH – Elizabeth’s daughter, future Shogun’s Lady (grandmother of Elizabeth I)

.  
ANNE – widow to Margaret’s son, future Shogun’s Lady (of Richard III)

.  
PRINCE – Elizabeth’s son, dead Shogun’s heir (would be Edward V)

.  
CHORUS – story-tellers who speak together; may include Koken, or any actors available; may also play LORDS.

.  
KOKEN – facilitate the action. Dressed in black, they move sets, manipulate props in full view of audience, scurrying like invisible elves. Two will play NINJA

.  
KI-PLAYER – Koken who signals the opening of scenes and key moments by striking the “KI” (key) or resounding wooden blocks.

.  
DOUBLES: Beth may play the Prince. If not doubled, they’re onstage once together. Rivers, Grey, Buckingham and Hastings may all double as Lords.

### **KABUKI RICHARD III**



Dancing Shiva

**I i Prologue:** *Flute. KI-Player kneels at edge of stage, and **strikes KI**, to begin play. Before the curtain, a once beautiful, now haggard, woman enters, faces audience.*

**MARGARET**

Margaret, I am  
You may call me  
a prophet  
then I could laugh  
A laugh is welcome  
when the sky hangs black  
The old have seen  
everything

There was a time  
my eyes danced  
boldly  
when I came riding  
by land and by sea  
from a far country  
to marry a Prince  
who grew to be  
Shogun  
But then came the killing  
then the killing

began

I saw a youth  
rise naked  
smeared with ash  
His name  
this time on earth  
is Richard  
but Shiva  
is his soul

Many don't believe me  
but if they lived my life  
they would believe  
as I

The Shogun, my husband  
my son, who was Prince—  
both murdered  
by Richard  
So now I am widow  
with my son's widow  
my Anne  
and we stand  
remembering...  
the youth I saw rise naked  
from the ash  
whose name  
is Richard

This earth spreads a feast  
Taste it all—  
as long as you're strong  
as long as you fight  
again, again  
until your loves  
are hacked away  
and then  
trailing bloody flesh  
they drag you through the market  
of a bald country town  
a woman left  
as women are  
with nothing

Still, I know  
though many don't believe  
that of the killing  
finally  
the gods will tire  
And then rises Shiva  
the young god Shiva  
comes

**I ii. Ki strikes; curtain opens; Richard alone** *in a dim spot in what is gradually revealed as a vast cemetery – may be the “field” to which we return in the final scene.*

*(Richard as a child, sitting on a mound of ashes [the ashes may be crouched Koken who emerge to dress him] He smears himself with ashes, plays with dangling bones on a necklace.)*

**MARGARET**

He is last born son  
of the one  
created  
to destroy me  
So I killed his father  
and they named him  
Richard

Orphan grown  
from all our wars  
bred only to haunt  
the little ground  
still unstained  
and so he became  
Shiva

*(A mime-dance with the aid of Koken: Richard grows from a child, changing, brought to manhood, finally will strike a **Mie pose** as the God Shiva. Koken's hands and arms create the rings of fire and many arms of Shiva)*

**CHORUS**

There is a rhythm  
at the center  
of the world  
we cannot see

Hold still and hear it

sink into feeling  
the whispering beat

This rhythm came  
before the Word  
before the You or I

Waken to dance  
Melt into the sky  
For something to be born  
something must die

**RICHARD**

High high!  
Leaping licking fire  
twirl out a world  
spun on a snake stick  
laughing as it curls  
Fly fly!

*(Richard gives a last leap and shout; quick and gleeful.. The Koken scurry away)*

**RICHARD**

Fly hieeee!

**I iii** *Drums. Music. The funeral procession of Shogun Edward enters: First the urn carried on by Hastings and Buckingham. Immediately behind, the late Shogun's widow, Elizabeth, flanked by her two brothers, Lords Rivers and Grey. Behind them Lady York and granddaughter Beth. Each person carries a white rose*

**RICHARD**

She comes  
The latest Shogun widow  
Lady of the North  
Look there  
her lip is dragging  
in the dust  
as well it might—  
my brother's bones  
still hot among the ash  
and she must know  
North Lady cannot stand  
alone

*(Calling to her)*  
Elizabeth

*(Richard spins round to greet them. Procession startled, stops. Urn will be set down)*

**RICHARD**  
My dear dead  
brother's wife  
I'm glad you went ahead  
without me

**ELIZABETH:** *(Shocked)* Richard!

**RICHARD**  
I see you've brothers  
of your own  
strong enough  
to take your arm

Lord brother Rivers  
*(Nodding to each of them)*  
Lord brother Grey  
you inlaws so kind  
to bear our rose of white

**ELIZABETH**  
How did you come  
so soon...

**RICHARD**  
Small wonder  
I came at all

**ELIZABETH:** ...from so far North?

**RICHARD**  
...without an invitation  
  
But where is my angel nephew  
Where is your son  
Missing his father's last rites?

**ELIZABETH**

How did you know?  
The Shogun  
died so suddenly

**HASTINGS:** I sent the news to Richard

**ELIZABETH:** *(Surprised)* You, Lord Hastings?

**RICHARD** *(Gleeful)*  
Aha. Lord Hastings  
That's how it was  
I asked you  
Where is the Prince?

*(Elizabeth and her brothers look at each other)*

Hiee hiee!  
You all look like  
roosters returned  
to find a fox  
has called

**YORK**  
Before the gods  
be civil, Richard!  
Pass on, pass on

*(York signals the procession to begin again. As they speak, it does)*

**RICHARD**  
Ah, Mother  
there you are behind

**YORK**  
Yes, here I am  
And you will  
answer to me

**RICHARD**  
When did vultures  
earn the right  
to wear a rose  
that's white

Don't you know  
what those in-laws plan?

**YORK**

I know my son  
the Shogun Edward  
who bore this world  
all smiling on his shoulder  
now is gone

**RICHARD:** I loved my brother too

**YORK:** Then show your knee!

**RICHARD** (*Bowing*)

Dear Mother  
you still have me

**YORK**

You in place of him!  
Can I arrange  
a trade?

**BETH** (*Holding York*)

Grandmother please  
You cannot bring  
my father back  
by hurting Richard

**RICHARD**

My angel niece  
You wear our rose  
with grace

**BETH**

Please help  
Your mother has another son  
Release him  
Your brother Clarence  
still imprisoned  
in Zashiki-ro

**RICHARD**

Ah, yes  
poor Clarence  
still closed up  
in Zashiki-ro  
What was the reason?  
Oh look there  
see who's coming?

Yes, I remember  
It was treason

*(A second procession enters; only two women, bearing red roses: former Lady of the North [Shogun's wife], Margaret, and Anne, her daughter-in-law. They approach opposite Elizabeth, moving toward three downstage urns)*

**ELIZABETH:** She dares come today!

*(Margaret proceeds, as dialogue continues, to kneel by the three urns, of her husband, Shogun Henry, her son Edward, Anne's father, Warwick – all killed by Richard)*

**YORK**

The ashes of her dead  
lie already cold  
No need to visit now  
except to mock us

**RICHARD:** Hail, North Lady Margaret

*(Margaret points her red rose at Richard as though it's her sword)*

**MARGARET**

Viper!  
You strike me  
calling "Lady of the North"  
She stole that crown from me  
But now, Elizabeth  
I take my turn  
to gloat  
Now it's you  
has lost a husband Shogun

**YORK** *(Pointing her rose)*

She-devil!  
You butchered mine!

As well as my first born son  
Let this son die in peace  
Leave Elizabeth alone

**RICHARD**

Put down your roses, Ladies!

*(Richard takes York's white rose from her)*

Have you not  
enough loves dead  
beneath this sign?

*(Richard smiles at them all, then, with the rose extended, he moves to Anne, who has stayed aside, hiding herself)*

The rose  
is potent  
beauty  
Within its power  
the warrior wilts  
his senses crazed  
his soul  
intoxicate  
with beauty  
has no will  
to war  
Beware  
the roses'  
gaze

*(As he finishes the dialogue, Richard holds the rose at Anne's chin)*

*(Anne lifts her face to look at Richard, swiftly raises her arm, and plunges a dagger toward his neck. He catches her wrist just in time to save himself)*

**RICHARD**

I kiss your fingertips  
sweet Anne

*(With a shriek, Anne tries to bite Richard's hand that is holding her wrist)*

**RICHARD**

Have you comfort, Margaret  
in this tender wife  
of your sweet son?

**MARGARET**

May her teeth bear poison  
She's stripped of men  
by your blade—  
*(Indicating the three urns)*  
of husband  
of father  
of husband's father Shogun

**RICHARD**

Then here she stands  
in need  
of all in all  
And I am he

**YORK:** Richard!

**MARGARET** *(Laughs)*

Aha!  
Let her strike  
and you'll see

*(Richard lets the dagger Anne holds move back to his throat)*

**RICHARD** *(Seductively)*

Tender cousin  
we two are braided  
limb on limb  
in blood  
This thing you call  
mother-in-law  
axed my father  
with the father of yours  
raised their two comrade heads  
on posts atop a wall

*(Anne shrinks away, nauseated)*

**MARGARET**

Look—  
steeped in ashes  
he still prowls  
running women mad

*(Richard forces Anne's dagger against his own throat)*

**RICHARD**

Hold your blade steady  
Let it breathe  
against my flesh  
Your father raised me  
from a boy

**ANNE** *(Growling)*

And you  
you killed...!

**RICHARD**

Now!  
Sink your blade deep!  
I killed him  
all for you

**ANNE:** Ahhhh...!

*(Anne cries out, staggers away from Richard)*

**RICHARD**

You cannot do me in?  
I'll do it for you  
If you want me to

*(Richard places himself formally, kneels, his sword laid out before him, preparing to commit seppuku [to disembowel himself]. The others back away. Anne prowls, watching him. When Richard is ready, he looks up for Anne's answer)*

**ANNE:** I do

**RICHARD**

Then sit where  
I can see myself  
die

in your eyes

*(Anne stands still, refusing to accommodate Richard)*

**RICHARD**

In exchange  
for my death  
that much you must do

*(Anne moves to kneel opposite Richard. He gazes at her, then tips his head back)*

**RICHARD**

Those eyes  
before me  
in every battle  
blazed  
I let no man  
who claimed you  
live

None lives  
but by devouring  
life  
and you  
belong only  
to me

Goodbye my Anne  
We two  
are no more  
than orphans  
teethed on war

*(Richard breathes, gazes at Anne, then, in the instant he reaches for the knife, she lunges, falling forward, and covers the knife with her body, preventing him from using it)*

*(As Anne lies face down, Richard flings himself into a Shiva-pose over her, triumphant)*

**RICHARD:** What have I done!

*(KI strikes. Mie pose. Formal movement of procession resumes)*

**RICHARD**

As we two wed  
tonight  
the roses blend  
the white with the red  
befriending  
all bleeding lovers  
Those who still breathe  
above this earth  
must warm each other

Mother?

*(York moves numbly forward to take Anne from Richard. The others, watching amazed now line both sides of the stage, forming an up and downstage corridor)*

*(Anne straightens, pulls free from York, looks back at Richard. Richard bows to her. Anne turns regally and exits upstage through the corridor of onlookers. It is a mysterious transformation, as though she has already become his wife, Lady of the North)*

*(Both sides, Elizabeth, Margaret, and their parties, fall in line to follow Anne. Only Buckingham remains. He slaps a fan in slow applause, punctuating his speech to Richard, who is motionless facing the audience)*

**BUCKINGHAM**

And she...  
will be...  
North Lady

*(Hastings has hesitated, now turns out of the exiting procession, and comes toward them)*

**HASTINGS:** Richard...

**RICHARD:** Eager Lord Hastings

**HASTINGS** *(Moving to him)*

Brilliant entrance!  
You unraveled  
their whole scheme  
with just one pull  
on a string  
Elizabeth  
with her brothers  
intends to rule  
the Prince

**RICHARD:** You are faithful, Hastings?

**HASTINGS**

To the Shogun  
always  
who, as your most loving brother  
named you alone  
Protector of his son

**RICHARD**

The Shogun—  
may his rest bring him peace—  
his Prince  
and I  
all thank you, Hastings

*(Hastings bows, and scurries away to catch the procession)*

**BUCKINGHAM**

He is faithful  
to himself  
as we all are  
Lord Hastings expects more  
from you  
than he'll ever get  
from Elizabeth

**RICHARD:** And you? Lord Buckingham

**BUCKINGHAM**

Humble Buckingham  
serves the Shogun  
you mean  
to be

*(Richard laughs loud, and draws a white cloth out into his hand)*

**BUCKINGHAM**

Anne  
who was wife  
to a red-rose Prince  
before you killed him

this time will not miss  
the crown

**RICHARD** (*Drawing his dagger*)

Astute of you  
And you expect...?

*(Richard slices his palm, and holds it, bloody, toward Buckingham. Buckingham, startled, then answers Richard's gesture by holding out his own hand)*

**BUCKINGHAM**

Would the land of...  
Kyushu  
be too grand a prize?

*(Richard swiftly slices Buckingham's palm)*

**RICHARD**

Not if I hear  
my favorite brother Clarence  
who's been closed up tight  
in Zashiki-ro  
these many lonely nights  
is dead

*(Buckingham startled, holds his bloody palm's wrist, looks at Richard)*

**BUCKINGHAM:** You want Clarence dead?

**RICHARD**

Blood into blood  
hand passes hand  
All comes to those  
who understand  
a cunning partner  
is worth  
unmeasured land

*(Richard smacks his palm into Buckingham's. **Mie pose**)*

**I iv Dark night. Field** (*same set, no urns*) *Riders entering, will cross stage (may be mimed). It is Rivers and Grey, the two brothers of Elizabeth, with a boy, the Prince.*

**PRINCE:** When will I be Shogun?

**RIVERS**

As soon  
as soon can be

**PRINCE**

That answer's for a child  
which I no longer am  
Uncle Rivers

**GREY:** You certainly are not

**PRINCE**

Then tell me, Uncle Grey  
Who is my enemy?  
Who must I hate?

*(As though on cue, a spear with a banner drops in front of them. All are startled, on guard,  
draw their weapons)*

**RIVERS:** Who's there?

**HASTINGS** *(Entering)*

No one  
you should challenge  
Lord Rivers

**GREY:** Hastings?

**HASTINGS**

Not if you're doing  
the Shogun's business

**RIVERS**

What do you mean?  
The Shogun...died

**HASTINGS**

But you know  
he named a Protector  
before

**BUCKINGHAM:** *(Entering)* Release the Prince

**RIVERS:** I will not. No!

*(They fight – Rivers, Hastings, Grey, Buckingham, Ninja guards who attend)*

**PRINCE:** Uncles, Uncles...!

*(Richard comes like a whirlwind, wheeling through, knocking all to the ground. Buckingham and Hastings scuttle aside)*

**PRINCE:** Uncle...Richard!

*(Richard comes easily to rest in a Shiva pose)*

**RICHARD:** Secure them!

*(Richard's ninjas brutally secure and exit with Rivers and Grey)*

**PRINCE**

Richard...

What are you doing  
with my other uncles?  
My mother will be angry  
with you

**RICHARD**

Good

You know politics  
already

*(Buckingham and Hastings laugh, and fall in formation behind Richard and the Prince, and the interrupted journey continues)*

**RICHARD**

It is true  
my tender Prince  
her brothers  
have position  
through your mother  
Your mother–  
you may be glad, child–  
is a woman

And a woman  
must get position  
through a man  
For your mother  
that man is your father  
and he is dead

**PRINCE**

And so...  
what will you do  
with them?

**RICHARD** (*Chuckles*)

Quick learner you are  
my budding young man

**PRINCE:** Where are we coming to?

**RICHARD**

Ah, see—  
your sweet sister Beth  
coming to greet you

**PRINCE**

This is Zashiki-ro  
I don't like it here

**BUCKINGHAM:** (*Exiting*) But here you'll be safe

**HASTINGS:** Till you are safely Shogun

**RICHARD**

Call your sister  
She's turning aside

**PRINCE**

Are you sure  
I should speak to her?  
She's only a woman

**HASTINGS:** Come in now, my Prince

*(Hastings ushers the Prince off as Buckingham runs on. Beth stands at a distance, staring.)*

*Richard puts a hand up to welcome her – but she turns swiftly, and leaves)*

**RICHARD:** What happened to Beth?

**BUCKINGHAM:** Not good

**RICHARD:** Go bid her come back

**BUCKINGHAM**

She came to visit  
Her Uncle Clarence

**RICHARD:** Ahhh, yes, Clarence

**BUCKINGHAM**

And so  
she found him–  
already dead

*(KI strikes. Double Mie Pose. Then Richard flips his hand; Buckingham hurries away.)*

*(Richard alone, to audience. He begins humorously, ironic, but winds into a frenzy)*

**RICHARD**

Not good at all  
So impolite

What should I do  
with these Uncles?  
Uncles everywhere  
Tell me when  
has any  
ever nurtured  
the ambition  
to be Uncle!  
But here we land  
dumped side by side  
none preferred  
none granted any rank  
but equal – Uncle!

I'll sweep us clean  
of Uncles

One by one  
remove them swiftly  
saving mess  
and futile screams  
I sweep us clean  
Stepping lightly  
as I can  
on every neck  
Such sweet relief  
in each fresh “crack”  
I sweep us clean!

Poor country mine—  
mute with your longing  
drooping  
wasted  
weeping for one  
strong enough to lead  
So from out  
this festering stew  
I simplify  
distill the finest  
“He”  
The last surviving  
Uncle  
must be me!

*(KI strikes. Mie pose)*

**I v. Palace**, raised floor in palace garden. Hastings enters, enjoying sun, birds

**HASTINGS**  
Tender petals  
will at last unfold  
Soon all is well  
in every tattered world  
The morning  
however long coming  
must finally answer  
the warbling bird

*(A Lord enters swiftly. [Rivers or Grey actor doubling])*

**LORD**

Lord Hastings...  
you must not meet  
The signs  
Are bad today  
Great turtle in the west  
means danger

**HASTINGS** *(Laughs)*

Go away  
If I worried  
over every sign  
nothing would ever get done  
It's a beautiful morning  
The Prince must be crowned

**LORD**

But North Lady's brothers  
the Lords Rivers and Grey  
both so swiftly killed?  
Both done away

**HASTINGS**

These are swift times  
my friend  
Look within...  
Only in quiet  
decision  
will balance be found

*(Buckingham enters. Another Lord follows. They all proceed onto the floor and place themselves formally, nervously, for a meeting)*

**BUCKINGHAM:** A bright day, Lords

**LORD**

Buckingham, tell us  
how feels the Protector today?

**BUCKINGHAM**

Richard?  
Sparkling as ever  
though matters of state

concern him  
naturally

**HASTINGS**

How did North Lady  
take the news

**BUCKINGHAM:** The...who?

**HASTINGS**

The Lady of the North – Elizabeth –  
of her brothers sudden deaths?

**BUCKINGHAM** (*Refusing Elizabeth's title*)

Ah, you mean  
Elizabeth  
the last Shogun's wife!

**HASTINGS** (*Uneasy*)

You stayed  
too long abed

**BUCKINGHAM**

In bed or out  
the world does roll

*(They are seated. Richard enters regally)*

**RICHARD**

Good morning, Lords  
You all look fresh as dew

*(Lords all salute him. He takes the head place)*

**LORDS:** Richard. Protector of the Prince

**RICHARD** (*Cheerfully*)

Today we set the coronation  
Yes?

**BUCKINGHAM**

We all know this  
Lord Protector

But of who?

**HASTINGS:** Who? The Prince!

**BUCKINGHAM**

I see  
you haven't heard  
the rumors

**HASTINGS:** What rumors

**LORD:** From Elizabeth's party?

**BUCKINGHAM:** Rumors that our candidate...

**HASTINGS:** Candidate!

**BUCKINGHAM**

does not have blood  
that's pure

**HASTINGS:** You're speaking treason!

**RICHARD** (*Soothingly*)

Peace, peace  
Buckingham has merely heard  
Elizabeth's marriage is not clear  
and by that slip – so sad –  
the Prince is illegitimate

(*Uproar in protest*)

**LORD**

Above a whisper  
that speech  
Is full of danger

**HASTINGS:** Ridiculous!

**RICHARD**

Peace, gentle Lords  
Our decision  
is a grave one

**HASTINGS**

The Shogun would not name  
a son whose title wasn't clear!

**BUCKINGHAM**

Perhaps  
a slippery marriage  
needed cover

**HASTINGS:** By all my honor – No!

*(Buckingham turns abruptly to Richard to draw him aside)*

**BUCKINGHAM**

Most honorable Richard—  
a circumstance  
I must relate  
to you alone

**RICHARD** *(Leaving them)*

Consider calmly  
Councilors

*(Buckingham and Richard move away, say nothing, but circle slowly on opposite sides, while watching the others. Lords buzz to each other, nervously)*

**LORD:** *(Low)* Strange...was Richard angry?

**HASTINGS:** Has any of you seen Elizabeth?

**LORD:** I sent him apricots today

*(As Buckingham and Richard join two Ninja follow them)*

**RICHARD**

I am grieved  
in my soul  
to hear it  
Seize the traitor  
Now

*(Ninja move swiftly and take rough hold of Hastings. Lords are thrown off guard)*

**RICHARD**  
Hastings—  
whom I trusted—  
has betrayed the state  
by keeping secrets

**HASTINGS:** What secrets?

**RICHARD**  
Be glad that I  
preserve my calm

**HASTINGS:** What secrets!

**RICHARD**  
Though you are stained  
by such deep treason  
in light of former service  
I allow you now the honor  
to take your life  
by *seppuku* [“hari kari”]

*(KI strike. Mie pose. All exit quickly in different directions)*

**I vi. Zashiki-ro.** *Palace floor tipped to make a wall. Still in a garden, but outside the prison. Elizabeth enters, supported by York. She carries a small red bundle.*

**ELIZABETH**  
Did they say  
that I was  
Lady of the North?  
If I were Lady of the North  
I’d say  
“Send in my son”  
and he would come  
Ahah. It is not so

**YORK**  
Did you never look ahead?  
And now you know...  
Oh – fine primed ambition  
and a cloudless day

think they  
can sail forever  
imagining  
no touch of fog  
can raze the line  
where earth meets sky  
High High

See – this battered hulk  
*(Referring to herself)*  
that bobs afloat  
through ages of raging wind  
still nosing scraps  
of family  
borne to shore  
Build womanhood on them

*(They have arrived where a Ninja stands guard, and steps forward to block their way. Anne is entering from another direction)*

**NINJA:** You cannot pass beyond

**ELIZABETH**

Of course I may pass  
Is this not Zashiki-ro  
and do you not know me?

**YORK:** Too well he knows

**ELIZABETH:** I've come to see my son

**YORK:** My grandson, I

**ANNE:** And I, my nephew Prince

*(Holding out her red bundle)*

**ELIZABETH**

I have the royal garment  
for him here

*(The Ninja does not move)*

**YORK:** We may not visit—why?

**NINJA:** No one may pass

**ELIZABETH:** *(Startled)* I hear a laugh!

**NINJA:** What?

**ELIZABETH**

A touch of music  
I think I hear his laugh

Whose order  
can deny me  
my own child!

**NINJA**

Only the highest  
Protector of the Prince

*(Anne crumbles, as though struck by a blow to the stomach)*

**YORK:** Almighty Richard

**ANNE:** My husband

**YORK**

My last born son  
What a blessing

**ANNE**

Stretch up here, Elizabeth  
It may be you can  
see him play

**ELIZABETH:** *(Bewildered)* The garment...

**YORK:** ...for the Prince to wear

**ELIZABETH**

So none  
who have the joy  
to see him

can forget  
they are in presence  
of the royal heir

**ANNE**

This man—  
in kindness—  
will take it in

**YORK:** Hah. What kindness

**ELIZABETH:** Will you take it?

**NINJA:** That much I can

*(As Elizabeth kisses the bundle and hands it to the Ninja, another Ninja comes running. We seem to hear the cry of a child “Mother!” but it may not be real)*

**NINJA 2:** The Lady Anne

**ELIZABETH:** I hear him calling me!

*(Ninja 2 bows in front of Anne)*

**NINJA 2**

You’re called to be  
Lady of the North

**YORK**

North Lady – she?  
Elizabeth—  
you must hide  
Take sanctuary

**NINJA**

Richard commands  
your presence  
instantly  
The coronation will proceed

**ANNE:** The coronation...how?

**NINJA**

You and he  
are to be crowned  
He the Shogun  
and you his Lady

ANNE: Nooo!

*(Anne gives a guttural cry, collapses. Mie of all)*

END ACT I

## ACT TWO

**II i Anne wanders out.** *It becomes gradually clear that she is dying.*

ANNE

I know it could  
have been a dream  
but still  
I hear him calling  
softly  
“Lady Lady...Lady...  
Why do I hear it  
What is the voice  
Oh let me rest  
Aiiiee

Lady of the North  
she filled my life–  
haunting promise  
beckoning grin  
“You’re meant to be  
that Lady of all women”  
But now I see  
that I was only meant  
to cradle agonies–  
again again  
and should I  
finally be she  
I die

I married Richard  
Since he touched me

I no longer  
touch the ground  
but walk some world  
between  
the one I know  
and one I cannot know—  
unknown forever—  
a creature  
made to move  
inside of twilight  
never laying down my head  
but still  
awaking never

No longer am I one  
with those  
who taste their food  
I cannot say with others  
“What a lovely breeze”  
as though  
my eyes can only see  
disaster  
that I always knew  
was there

Richard needs me  
that I know  
He reaches toward me  
suctioning my self  
and soul  
full off my bones  
to nourish him  
Each time he wakes  
I know  
my step is lighter  
on the earth  
My step is dim

*(Anne collapses; engulfed by the next scene, she'll drag herself away)*

**II ii Raised floor full of dancers**, celebrating the coronation. All the women may be used, except Anne, and all the men.

**CHORUS**

There is a rhythm  
at the center  
of the world  
we cannot see

Hold still and hear it  
sink into feeling  
the whispering beat

**MARGARET** (*Moves apart*)

When all was still  
within  
your breast still  
moved  
out and in  
flowing on the stream  
of all  
plunging to the sea  
knowing – nothing is  
that does not  
move  
with you

*(Richard, gloriously dressed as Shogun, enters through the center. Dancers yield space to him, but his presence makes them dance more furiously. He strikes a Shiva pose)*

**CHORUS**

Dance it down  
Pound again  
Push the veins

**RICHARD**

Your pulse explodes  
like shot in crystal air  
a spattered shriek  
of bowels  
ripped raw from sleep  
There is nothing  
that I would not dare  
When horror floods  
your brain  
then push it higher

beat the beat  
my sweet ones  
dance the dream

**CHORUS**

This rhythm came  
before the Word  
before the You or I

**RICHARD**

Kaleidoscoping  
beauty out of  
terror's brutal scream  
High High!

Leaping licking fire  
twirl out a world  
spun on a snake stick  
laughing as it curls

**MARGARET**

Waken to dance  
Melt into the sky  
For something to be born  
something must die

*(All fall into a bow to Richard, their faces to the floor)*

**CHORUS**

High high  
Shogun Richard!

*(Procession, with each coming to bow before Richard individually, begins)*

**RICHARD**

You're choosing well  
to do me grace  
cleaning my footpath  
with your face  
Hee Hee  
Now let me see  
How many did I chase  
as far as Hell

to get this place

*(First to bow to him is his mother, York)*

**RICHARD**

Is this your blessing?  
Spittle under breath  
How ungrateful when  
I've made you once again  
a Shogun's mother

You don't begrudge  
poor Clarence' death  
Between us family  
what's another brother

*(Other Lords bow low to Richard as he continues)*

**RICHARD**

Why don't they up  
and butcher me?!  
Because they love me  
They adore...  
The more  
atrocities I do  
the more their admiration  
grows  
If now I make my stool  
in this one's face  
he'll swear he sniffs  
a rose

To find the evil  
men can do  
don't search in books  
Try bedrooms  
backyards  
chambers of the church  
The worst among you  
faint in disbelief  
at what grotesque inhuman horrors  
simple hearts have worked

*(Elizabeth comes forward to bow. Her daughter Beth behind, won't move to Richard)*

**RICHARD**

Ah Elizabeth  
come out from hiding  
to wish me...  
what?  
Happiness and wealth?  
My Anne declines  
to share  
and fades away (so sad)  
I require a North Lady in health  
Whatever will I do  
for heirs?

Is that my tender niece  
back there  
shying so  
denying her wares?

**BETH**

I see you, Uncle  
clear

**RICHARD**

Beth dear Beth  
you risk my temper  
Will not bend for me?  
Well, well...  
I owe you  
so you take your fee

*(Buckingham, the last to approach, bows ostentatiously)*

**BUCKINGHAM:** Great Shogun

**RICHARD** *(Rises menacing)*

Buckingham  
my very closest  
friend

**BUCKINGHAM**

All we have achieved

will remind you  
of the day  
our two bloods kissed  
in this...

*(Buckingham draws out the white cloth bloodied with their pledge)*

**RICHARD:** *(Furious)* All?

**BUCKINGHAM**

Great Lord  
you remember  
the title you promised  
was mine:  
Master of all lands  
of Kyushu

**RICHARD**

I am Shogun  
And foul whisperings say  
my closest friend  
has wantonly betrayed me

**BUCKINGHAM:** My Lord...how!

**RICHARD**

You didn't think  
I'd sniff your trap?  
What cleverness you show

**BUCKINGHAM:** *(Frightened)* What trap?

*(But Richard instantly flips his mood as though it's forgotten, speaking casually)*

**RICHARD**

I have a tickle  
just here...

*(Gestures down his throat)*

Can you scratch it?

No?

Just so

there's a tiny bit  
of something  
catches those  
who raise their voice  
to cheer me

**BUCKINGHAM:** Do you refuse me my land?

**RICHARD**  
A niggling bit  
You left it there  
to rattle in the dark—  
this stone

**BUCKINGHAM**  
You are Shogun  
and we pledged:  
my title  
for the Shogunate

**RICHARD**  
Annoying!  
How it tugs me by the neck  
chokes up the throat  
of my acclaim—  
this little stone

**BUCKINGHAM** (*Heavily*)  
What stone...  
is in your way

**RICHARD** (*Charming*)  
A mite  
for someone of the skill  
you show  
Just one small prince  
inside Zashiki-ro

**BUCKINGHAM:** (*Backing away*) Great Shogun...

**RICHARD**  
We are not  
such great friends

then?

**BUCKINGHAM** *(Turning aside)*

Excuse me please  
I must consider

**RICHARD**

Consider  
Hah  
A heart  
that wavers once  
is next day  
mute  
as stone

Secure him

*(Ninja moves, takes hold of Buckingham. Richard rises, draws his sword)*

**RICHARD**

The deepest  
deeds in service to all  
a leader does  
alone

*(KI strikes. Mie pose. Then darkness. Lights cross stage as Ninja drag an unwilling Buckingham. Behind them the palace is dismantled down to the bare prison)*

**NINJA**

Come then  
You must come

**BUCKINGHAM**

Give me time  
This man we serve  
must be a devil  
Let me speak to him  
again

**NINJA 2**

You're misled  
most honorable  
cheating friend

NINJA

Even children know—  
a devil  
is no more real  
than an angel

*(They disappear with their lights)*

**II iii Richard sits alone in a dim spot in a pose of meditation.**

*(The Prince, with a short sword, approaches stealthily behind him. He's wearing his long red royal garment, and holds his sword high, pointing at Richard's neck)*

PRINCE

Your business here!  
Or I will stop your life

*(Richard startled, then breathes, drawing himself taller)*

**RICHARD** *(Quietly)*

You imagine  
you can stop my life?

PRINCE

Uncle Richard?  
Why are you sitting here  
cold  
and alone  
You've come to release me?

**RICHARD:** In time. In time

**PRINCE:** What were you doing

**RICHARD:** Remembering

PRINCE

Excuse  
my interruption then  
I must be on guard  
for assassins

**RICHARD**

Will you escape them  
when they come?

**PRINCE**

I will  
I'm a true Shogun

*(Richard laughs)*

**PRINCE:** What were you remembering?

**RICHARD**

When your grandfather  
was young as you...  
there was a baby Shogun  
left to reign  
and round him grew  
a swirl of blood  
that has not stopped  
since then

When your father was  
as young as you  
his father  
who was also mine  
fighting  
in that endless tide of blood  
came next in line  
for Shogun  
but then was born  
a baby Prince

When I  
was young as you  
our father in all that blood  
was four years drowned  
I served your father  
in the fight  
and so  
the flowing blood still grew  
into a mighty undertow  
and then you see

we slew that Shogun  
and his Prince  
who was  
as young as me

*(Silence. The Prince watches Richard eagerly, but Richard sits stony, morose)*

**PRINCE:** I'll be good as you

*(Prince stands, making a flourish with his sword)*

**RICHARD** You will

**PRINCE** I wear the rose

**RICHARD**

The rose  
is potent  
beauty  
Beware...

**PRINCE**

I am the worthy heir  
of my father  
and of you

**RICHARD** *(Laughs)*

I see  
Another baby Shogun

**PRINCE** *(Angry)*

I'm no baby  
Do you have your sword?

*(Richard draws his sword)*

**RICHARD:** Oh yes

**PRINCE:** Come then

*(They fight – the boy against the warrior. They play)*

**RICHARD**

This is the dance  
my fine young Prince

**PRINCE:** I'll be Shogun!

*(When Richard finally takes him, it may be surprising, but it is clear, neat murder)*

**RICHARD**

A life at war  
is no more  
sport  
than this

*(Richard kills the Prince. **Mie pose**)*

**II iv The instant the Prince is killed**, a scream and howling begins and builds into a hurricane. Lights flash bright, then sudden darkness.

*(Set collapses, and we are in the field [cemetery] again. Richard has stayed center. The Prince is gone. The impression is of a great swirl of wind. Howl continues. Margaret appears in a spot. York and Elizabeth, from other spots, howl—)*

**ELIZABETH / YORK**

My son...The child...  
My son...The child...

*(Howling continues behind her as Margaret speaks)*

**MARGARET**

That's all  
That's all  
No more

**RICHARD:** You think so?

**MARGARET**

They gather against you  
They come from all sides  
The dance will destroy—  
end the fire, water, wind  
end the man that dares to murder  
end the man that kills

**RICHARD**

Stupid women  
It's you that set me on

**ELIZABETH**

I prepared a sweet life  
set it free  
but thirsty fangs  
lay waiting  
Kill him  
Kill!

**RICHARD**

When you all drop still-borns  
death is coming soon  
Death starts in the womb

**YORK**

My jagged nails  
would scrape this womb  
to strips of skin  
rather than give birth to you  
again  
Kill him  
Kill!

**RICHARD**

Be one  
Take part  
Together bend  
and share your fall  
I am the order  
all in all

**MARGARET**

Abortive last dregs  
of your mother's  
worn-out sack  
Vomiting precious wine...

**RICHARD**

See the exquisite pattern  
snowflake...

**MARGARET:** ...you mutilate your line

**RICHARD**

...follow to where it falls  
soft  
on the fresh torn  
belly of a doe  
Crimson splatter  
on the snow  
I didn't start these wars

*(York turns on Margaret, grabs her, circles)*

**YORK**

No...  
It's you  
usurping outsider  
You  
you foreign worm!

**MARGARET**

I had a son  
died so  
And so did she  
and so...  
I say no more

**YORK**

You butchered mine before!

*(Elizabeth grabs York, circling)*

**ELIZABETH**

You disdained me  
as mate  
for your son  
and so this other  
snake-spawn of yours has...

**YORK** *(To Elizabeth)*

You common  
glutinous fly  
You shoved in

your own family

**RICHARD** *(Delighted)*

How!

Rabid dames  
carry on the war

How strange  
that only women  
stand alive?

Full-grown females  
impotence complete

Except to howl  
your consequence  
is nil

Off-cast would-be  
Ladies of the North  
you're much too  
insignificant  
to kill

*(Yowl, as women fly to attack Richard, then yowl stops abruptly at appearance of Beth.)*

*(Beth stands at a distance, looking young, innocent, holding out her arms. Draped across them is the red royal garment of the Prince. Seeing it, Elizabeth and York drop to kneel face down, keening for the dead Prince. Richard, too, is stunned by the image. Margaret backs away)*

**MARGARET**

The forces  
gather against you  
Richard  
It won't be long

**RICHARD**

My angel niece  
Elizabeth?

*(Richard turns his attention from gazing at Beth to her mother, who still kneels. As Richard approaches her to make his move, Margaret, aside, moans for them all)*

**MARGARET**

The center of faith  
is a desert now  
The lord of the animals  
roams

extinguishing our forms  
all illusions into ash  
laughing as we weep  
behind his mask

*(Beth backing off)*

**RICHARD**

We must take good care  
of your daughter

*(Elizabeth looks up at Richard, frightened)*

**ELIZABETH:** I have no daughter

**RICHARD:** Do not mock me

**ELIZABETH:** None

**RICHARD:** Now that she has no father...

**ELIZABETH:** None!

**RICHARD**

...and I have always been  
her loving Uncle

**ELIZABETH**

Loving...  
as you were Uncle  
to her baby brother?

**RICHARD** *(Seductively)*

Elizabeth—  
you feel the life  
that surges new  
within  
Its essence  
is not in myself alone  
but centered  
in a spark  
that flies...between

Where should it fly?  
Into another house?

.  
Sensual contact  
is the human's path  
into a holy life  
Ecstasy  
is next to being  
God  
I must have a wife

.  
**ELIZABETH**

You mean...  
You want me to...

.  
**RICHARD**

Not you  
Your daughter

.  
**ELIZABETH:** My daughter

.  
**RICHARD**

I want her  
for my wife

.  
**ELIZABETH**

You!  
Killer of her brother?  
Of her uncle?

.  
**RICHARD:** Dear Uncle Clarence

.  
**ELIZABETH:** Killer of her aunt!

.  
**RICHARD:** The Aunt I deny

.  
**ELIZABETH**

You killed your wife Anne  
as surely  
as you killed my son

.  
**RICHARD**

And I

dear one  
am Shogun

So my wife  
however blushing  
she may be  
will still be  
Lady of the North  
*(Close to her)*  
You labored all your life  
to have that place  
Why not let it stay  
with one of yours?  
Rejoice!  
You have a daughter  
She may have a son  
and he may be  
another day  
Shogun

*(Pause. Then Elizabeth turns primly, and gives Richard her hand)*

**ELIZABETH** *(Summoning)*  
My daughter—  
Beth?

*(The instant Elizabeth turns to the place where Beth stood, with a flash, instead of Beth, there stands the Prince – turning into place, perhaps bloody)*

**ELIZABETH**  
My son—  
his ghost!

*(Behind the Prince, comes a procession of ghosts – first Anne, then Buckingham, Hastings, Lords, all the company. The Prince speaks as ghosts swirl in behind him)*

**PRINCE**  
We gasp between  
two ages  
both cast back to shore  
The last – not dead  
is dying  
The next—

without strength  
to be born

**RICHARD**

No!  
You breathe no more  
Stay there

**PRINCE:** None else is left alive

*(The ghosts drift swiftly to surround Richard. He counters, terrified)*

**RICHARD**

I needed you  
and you obliged  
dissolving  
each after each  
into me  
thus  
molding my career  
So now  
you cannot hold  
this course  
The world ends here!

**PRINCE:** There always comes another

**RICHARD**

No!  
I've no remorse  
There is no turning back

**PRINCE:** Then why do you fear?

*(Lightning. The ghosts attack Richard. Movement of battle – synthesizer ghost battle. Ghosts create ring of fire. Richard is killed. Total silence. Richard, dead in the center, will slowly revive, to finally appear as Shiva. Anne, Margaret and company softly in chorus speak as the transformation begins to take place–)*

**ANNE**

Our native earth  
may stain all red  
but still  
life will renew itself

from clay  
Destruction and creation  
from earth's core  
will rise and flow forth  
come what may

**CHORUS**

Take part  
in that of which you are  
a part  
A whisper  
in the wind between  
the howl of birth and death  
Kaleidoscoping beauty  
out of terror's brutal scream

**ANNE**

Cold sun slides  
without a sound  
behind dark mountain  
but strikes its flame  
again  
at dawn

*(Richard, now become Shiva, begins to dance)*

**CHORUS**

There is a rhythm  
at the center  
of the world  
we cannot see  
Hold still and hear it  
sink into feeling  
the whispering beat

**MARGARET**

When all was still  
within  
your breast still moved  
out and in

**CHORUS**

...flowing on the stream

of all  
plunging back to sea

**MARGARET**

...knowing  
nothing is  
that does not move  
with you and me

**ANNE**

You need not weep forever  
You can find relief  
when you learn you are the source  
of all your grief  
Your demon loses his force  
when you remove your belief  
You create every evil  
you see

**PRINCE**

Believe in joy  
and joy is yours  
All will be as you see it to be  
Evil cannot survive  
when you don't keep it alive  
with your fear

**CHORUS**

This rhythm came  
before the Word  
before the You or I

**PRINCE**

Banish fear  
and you will fly  
Your way is clear

**ANNE**

Dance your dance as lightly  
as any girl or boy  
Beat your beat in perfect time  
marking only joy

## **CHORUS**

Waken to dance  
melt into the sky  
For something to be born  
something must die  
Waken to dance  
Melt into the skies

## **PRINCE**

Wherever joy is born  
evil dies

*(Richard, dancing in full splendor, strikes Shiva pose. **Final company MIE**)*

## **END OF PLAY**

## **ACHILLES**

A Kabuki Play

A company of players tell, sing, dance and enact the story

**SET:** Presents the "plain of Troy" which takes on many moods.

Achilles' tent will be the main scenic item, it's appearance and disappearance incorporated into the company's action. All scenes flow seamlessly from one into another.

**CHARACTERS:** 5 men, 2 women, Chorus of women and men

BRISEIS – Narrator. Achilles' war prize

PATROKLOS – Greek warrior. Achilles' best friend

AGAMEMNON – King; Commander of Greek armies

ACHILLES – greatest Greek warrior

THETIS – Achilles' mother, Goddess of the Sea

PRIAM – King of Troy

HECTOR – Priam's son, greatest Trojan warrior

**CHORUS:** by turns they play:

SOLDIERS – both Greek and Trojan

CHRYSEIS – Agamemnon's war prize; daughter of high priest.

LYCAON (boy) – Priam's son, young soldier

GOD VOICES – Athena and Apollo

RIVER VOICE – the River speaks

KOKEN – "enablers" of the story; stage-hands



*Photo by Jorge Lascar: Amphitheater at Kourion, Cyprus*

## ACHILLES

**First we see only Briseis, the narrator, isolated in a pin spot. Up-scrim unseen is a chorus of Greek soldiers led by Patroklos, speaking like a whispered echo**

### **BRISEIS**

I am Briseis  
only a woman

And so  
my grasp of truth  
is in shadow  
my story, only a part  
You will forgive me?

In all of my life before  
I knew  
its purpose was living  
but one day I grew  
to know  
the purpose of life  
is war

**SOLDIERS** *(Whispered)*

...is war  
the purpose of life  
is war

*(Very gradually, the soldiers become visible in dim silhouette)*

**BRISEIS:** When the war started

**SOLDIERS:** or why

**BRISEIS:** no one knows

**SOLDIERS:** No one knows.

**BRISEIS:** They say it was a woman...

**SOLDIERS:** Helen!

**BRISEIS**

...running from her husband  
with the second son of Priam  
the king

So she  
though a queen before  
in the end will be  
like me

no more  
than a prize of war

**SOLDIERS:** *(Strong)* A prize of war.

**BRISEIS**

My life before  
was a garden—  
fine parents ruling the valley  
three brothers standing  
like tassled grain  
so tall—

but all

were cut down  
cut clean  
one dark summer's eve  
when I  
became the prize  
of Achilles

*(Space opens with night behind scrim; Chorus may create crickets, owl, stillness. As Briseis' story goes on, goat bleats, neighing horse, isolated sounds of a raid punctuate her description.)*

**BRISEIS**

A goat bleat  
in midnight air  
came first  
Then came the clash of bronze

**BRISEIS and SOLDIERS:** *(Whisper)* What moves on the mountain?

*(Briseis, or shadows on scrim, may mime waking her husband, and etc—)*

**BRISEIS**

I touched  
my soft-breathing husband  
gathered a fleece  
round my shoulders  
stepped to the door

Torch light  
flickered  
on white walls below  
Voices rose  
startled  
from sleep

I saw my brother  
slight in his tunic  
struggling with another  
all armed

**SOLDIERS:** Another all armed

**BRISEIS**

Then a grunt and a fall—

a sword blade came free  
laying open the deep belly  
of my brother  
there on white stones

**SOLDIERS**

As the others came running  
too late for all three

**BRISEIS**

My throat  
opened to scream  
but a hand sealed my mouth—  
my sweet husband breathing  
"Be still. Stay still"  
and seizing his sword from the wall

*(Chorus creates sounds of raid – donkey brays, swords clashing, muffled yells)*

**SOLDIERS**

Donkeys brayed  
Armor came clanking

**BRISEIS**

"No," I cried, "Stay!"  
but too late  
Already a torch blazed  
cross his face  
Gleaming silver filled our door  
I staggered  
my eyes frozen open

A sword's point  
caught my sweet's chin  
uprooting his teeth  
splitting his tongue  
twisting up into his brain

Blood rushed down that sword  
I saw it and then saw no more  
But I heard as I fell  
a soft voice

**PATROKLOS**

"Don't weep, pretty child  
I'll see you married now  
to a prince, a young god..."

**SOLDIERS and PATROKLOS**

...the finest  
in all the world wide"

**BRISEIS**

That voice was Patroklos  
the kindest of men

**SOLDIERS:** And the silver death-bringing god...

**BRISEIS:**...was Achilles

*(Immediate shout from the soldiers, with drum beat)*

**SOLDIERS:** Achilles. Call Achilles!

**PATROKLOS**

Achilles the champion  
Our fastest, our best  
Achilles!

*(Soldiers sway with drum beat, becoming fully lit upstage of scrim, Agamemnon at their head)*

**SOLDIERS**

Nine long years of seige  
but Troy's wall  
still stands  
*(Shout)*  
Agamemnon!

Nine long years of seige  
but Troy's wall  
still stands  
Agamemnon!

**PATROKLOS**

Men and ships came  
All the kingdoms of Greece

for Agamemnon

**SOLDIERS**

Nine long years of seige  
but Troy's wall  
still stands  
Agamemnon!

**PATROKLOS**

We came for the woman  
came for revenge  
with Agamemnon!

**SOLDIERS**

Agamemnon  
King of Mycenae  
golden kingdom of Greece

**PATROKLOS**

We came with Agamemnon  
came for his brother's wife  
for Helen of Sparta

**SOLDIERS:** Now Helen of Troy!

**BRISEIS:**

The armies were bored  
they had nothing to show

**SOLDIERS:** No reward!

**BRISEIS:** So they ravished our mountain

**SOLDIERS**

We ravished the mountain  
for prizes  
nights of pleasure  
a dancing feast

**BRISEIS**

Now I am the prize of Achilles  
but Patroklos  
dear friend

promised true

Achilles took me  
not rudely  
without anger  
through my tears

**SOLDIERS**

Nights of pleasure  
spoil and prizes  
a dancing feast

**BRISEIS**

Still, the best prize  
is Agamemnon's

**SOLDIERS**

The blushing daughter  
of a powerful priest!

*(Sudden bright image, upscrim, of Chryseis, the priest's daughter)*

*(Chorus: noisy partying gradually overwhelmed, stilled by single **ominous tone** as dawn rises)*

**PATROKLOS**

But at dawn  
when the rose-flame ball  
lifts through the mist  
its trail burning purple  
straight across waves  
straight up the sand

**SOLDIERS**

But at dawn  
something new  
breaks on land

*(Chryseis' image is disappearing)*

**BRISEIS:**

A whisper  
a fearful word  
comes wafting

from tent into tent

*(Soldiers begins whispers that will swell)*

**PATROKLOS**

A whisper  
wakens the living  
to quiver  
to hide  
to draw tent-flaps tight

**BRISEIS:** But too late

**SOLDIERS:** *(Barely audible)* The plague...the plague

**BRISEIS and PATROKLOS**

The whisper  
the fearful word  
still hurries on  
licentiously curling  
like mist before dawn

**SOLDIERS:** The plague. It's the plague!

*(The scrim lifts; the Soldiers, plague-stricken, swarm – a living fresco of victims. Briseis, surrounded, moves upstage, hidden behind Soldiers who writhe–)*

**SOLDIERS** *(Individuals and Chorus)*

Some god has sent us this  
Infection!  
Stay away!  
What can we do?  
Stay away!  
No, save us! Save us!  
Stay away!

*(Achilles entering; Soldiers swarm to the side, giving Achilles a grand entrance)*

**SOLDIERS**

Achilles! Call Achilles!  
Achilles the champion  
the fastest, the best  
Call “Achilles”

and all Trojans  
even Hector the mighty  
hide behind walls  
Achilles!

*(Achilles is within reach; some gasping victims try to reach him, while others hold them back.  
Soldiers plead—)*

Help us, save us, heal us please!

*(Achilles stops, aware of their reaching for him: instant silence)*

**ACHILLES**

They are soldiers  
Do not hold them from me

*(A hesitation, then one soldier speaks)*

**SOLDIER**

Great Achilles  
They have the plague

*(Loud murmuring, as soldiers verify their condition)*

**ACHILLES**

Then their need is great  
Do you think I fear plague?

**SOLDIERS**

Great Achilles  
fleet as wind  
loved by the gods  
Tell Agamemnon  
Beg him for us  
You can speak  
and you can save

It is Agamemnon  
the omens tell us  
it is he  
who brought the plague

*(Agamemnon enters self-satisfied, leads Chryseis the priest's daughter, her eyes shyly averted)*

*(Achilles gestures sharply; soldiers surround him. He bends to listen to them. Agamemnon stops, imperiously)*

**AGAMEMNON**

What is this howling  
this chaos?  
And who says  
I am the cause!

**SOLDIERS:** Help us, save us, heal us, please!

**SOLDIER**

Great Agamemnon  
leader of the armies  
they have the plague!

**AGAMEMNON**

I can see what they have  
Clean it up  
whatever it takes!  
No attack can be launched  
not even defense  
in this state

*(The soldier bows, but looks helplessly to Achilles)*

**ACHILLES**

Great leader  
a way has been whispered

**AGAMEMNON:** To rid us of this plague?

**ACHILLES**

One way  
But the soldiers have fear

**AGAMEMNON**

Damn their fear!  
What is the way?

**ACHILLES:** A beautiful girl

**AGAMEMNON:** *(Startled, but pleased)* My prize?

**ACHILLES:** She's the daughter of a priest?

**AGAMEMNON:** And amazingly adept

**ACHILLES:** Her father came to beg for her?

**AGAMEMNON**

Pathetic, yes  
He offered ransom

**ACHILLES:** And you refused?

**AGAMEMNON:** I threw him out

**ACHILLES**

You refused  
And we have plague

**AGAMEMNON:** What?

**ACHILLES and SOLDIERS:** And so we have plague

*(Agamemnon swells with anger, eyes flashing with rage)*

**AGAMEMNON**

No!  
Damnable priests  
They prophesy  
nothing but evil!  
It cannot be so

**ACHILLES:** There is one way to know

**AGAMEMNON:** *(Explodes)* No!

*(The soldiers, dismayed, groan, cough, seem worse. Agamemnon, looks them over, then at Chryseis, knowing the omen is true)*

**ACHILLES:** Send her home

*(Agamemnon is furious, anguished, but draws himself up proudly)*

**AGAMEMNON**

Let no one say  
Agamemnon  
does not tend his troops

*(Chryseis looks up hopefully, steps forward)*

If she must go  
I'll let her go

*(The soldiers rouse feebly, joyful. Chryseis bows gratefully to Achilles)*

**AGAMEMNON** *(Furious)*

But you  
must find me another!

*(Achilles, mild until now, turns on Agamemnon, suddenly angry)*

**ACHILLES**

Insatiate dog  
How!?  
We have no standing pool  
of women

*(From the soldiers, Patroklos steps toward Achilles, worried, a restraining hand out, while Achilles goes on raging)*

**ACHILLES**

All prizes  
have been given  
Do you intend  
to take one back?

*(Agamemnon smiles at Patroklos, nods toward Chryseis)*

**AGAMEMNON**

Release her  
Send her home  
Accept no ransom

*(Joy from all. Two soldiers make a way for Chryseis as she begins to move out. But Achilles, wary, senses Agamemnon's intention)*

**ACHILLES**

Return her  
to her father now  
and get another  
when we ravish Troy

Unless you think  
we never will?

*(Agamemnon, still smiling, ignores Achilles' challenge. Chryseis is gone)*

**AGAMEMNON**

So you keep your prize  
while I give up mine?  
No. Let the Greeks  
find me another...

or I take Briseis

*(Achilles, restrained until now, explodes)*

**ACHILLES**

My prize?!  
Arrogant snake  
You're full of nothing  
but lust and greed  
Why should I fight for you?  
I'll leave!

**AGAMEMNON**

Then leave!  
What do I need  
with a strutting  
acid-tongued pup?  
You set yourself  
equal to me?  
Now feel the power of Agamemnon  
King of kings  
Give her up!

*(Enraged, Achilles roars and draws his sword. But just as he raises it to strike, his head jerks backward; he is frozen in dazzling light)*

**VOICE OF ATHENA:** *(Amplified)* Stop your sword!

*(Light and sound projections as Briseis narrates the supernatural moment)*

**ACHILLES:** *(To the light)* Let go!

**BRISEIS**

Down swept Athena  
golden daughter of Zeus  
unseen by all  
but her dear Achilles  
With her terrible eyes  
ablaze  
she yanked his fiery hair

**VOICE OF ATHENA**

Put back your sword  
Slash him only with words  
Another day  
he will pay  
Obey!

*(Achilles head is released. Alarmed, Patroklos has his hand on Achilles as he speaks to Agamemnon. Achilles lowers his sword, still gazing upward)*

**PATROKLOS**

Wise Agamemnon  
Though you have more power  
do not take the girl  
that was given to him  
And Achilles, you...

**ACHILLES**

The Goddess stopped my hand.  
I would have killed him, Patroklos

*(Agamemnon stands calm, smiling)*

**AGAMEMNON**

Soft-voiced Patroklos  
this quarrelsome boy  
does not deserve you

*(Achilles whirls on Agamemnon)*

**ACHILLES**

Wine-sot! Dog-face  
without any gut!

**PATROKLOS**

Achilles, please  
You owe him allegiance!

**ACHILLES**

He's not my Lord!  
I am a Prince!

*(Challenging Agamemnon)*

Do you ever  
stand in frontlines  
of the battle?  
When do you venture  
on a raid?

**AGAMEMNON:** *(Warmly, to Patroklos)* Why not leave him?

**ACHILLES**

Never!  
Never do you dare  
a fight!

**PATROKLOS** *(Sadly)*

Achilles  
You're making  
the Trojans rejoice

**ACHILLES** *(Spins on Patroklos)*

I have no quarrel with Trojans!  
What have Trojans done to me?  
Have they raided my cattle, my horses  
Have they cut my harvests  
from off the rich plain?  
No!  
I came to battle

for this man's revenge  
and he, he alone  
offends me

*(Achilles whirls on Agamemnon in a towering rage, raising his scepter in the air. Soldiers cower, terrified at Achilles' rage)*

**ACHILLES**

Thief!!

By this scepter  
which will nevermore sprout leaf  
or shoot or bud  
being once carved from its tree

I swear

in the day of your distress  
when you come to fall  
at the hand of Hector  
you will look and not find me  
you will know not what to do  
you will tear your heart with rage  
for the day you insulted  
the greatest of the Greeks

*(Achilles hurls his scepter to the ground. Stunned pause. Soldier who took Chryseis away runs on excited, but stops, frightened by the stony silence)*

**SOLDIER** *(Announcing)*

His daughter is delivered  
safe to the priest

*(Soldiers straighten, feeling beginning of relief from plague, but all still riveted on Achilles' glare at Agamemnon)*

**AGAMEMNON** *(Looking at Achilles)*

Patroklos?

Give me his girl

*(Patroklos looks at Achilles, who doesn't flinch)*

**ACHILLES** *(Softly)*

Yes

It is fit

It was you who first

brought her to me—

Bring Briseis

*(Patroklos troubled, moves to get Briseis. Soldiers part, and Briseis is revealed happily approaching Achilles, who looks longingly at her, then turns away)*

*(Patroklos holds out his hand and Briseis steps forward to go with him, but when she sees she's where he's leading her, she sadly turns to gaze back at Achilles when she is handed to Agamemnon)*

*(Achilles refuses to watch as Agamemnon exits with Briseis, in grand procession. The soldiers, relieved the plague is lifting, follow Agamemnon, cheering)*

*(The stage grows darker and darker while Achilles is left alone; he is now at the edge of the sea in a storm. Sounds of waves crashing, and rolling surf)*

*(Alone, a gigantic roar erupts from Achilles. When he has roared to the peak of his anguish, he weeps. When his weeping becomes deep and loud, he calls—)*

**ACHILLES**

Thetis. *(Waits)* Thetis!

*(The surf becomes louder, and Achilles calls his loudest—)*

Mother!!

*(Sudden quiet, then softer wave music. Then, out of dark sea and mist, Thetis comes dancing. A grand, mysterious entrance. Sea may be created only by lighting and sound, or by colored streamers, flowing fabric, and mime)*

*(When Thetis sings, the Chorus may echo her, singing from offstage. When he sees Thetis coming, Achilles joins her dancing beside the waves)*

**THETIS**

Seek no answer  
from the sea  
The rolling mother of all  
knows not why  
she needs no reason  
to be

She only flows  
bounded by

dappled sway  
deep streaming light  
dancing bright  
through indigo  
turquoise  
marine

Seek no answer  
from the sea  
she knows not why  
she needs no reason  
to be

Only flow  
in tomorrow  
Let it embrace you  
leaving no trace  
of today

Seek no answer  
from the sea  
Only flow  
Be still and know  
your future  
in her endless  
sigh

*(Thetis teases Achilles back and forth with the dance, says laughing--)*

**THETIS**

There once was a boy  
who ran off to the sea  
Was it you?

But he ran and he ran  
so fast  
faster than even the wind  
had seen  
a boy run

Then he sang and he sang  
so well  
better than even the birds

had heard  
a boy sing

So they whispered  
he must be a God...  
What does this boy  
want with me?

*(Achilles, drawn away from his sorrow, laughing, suddenly remembers his anguish, and sits abruptly, rude—)*

**ACHILLES**

Why do you ask  
what you know?

**THETIS**

You seldom call  
You've become such a man

**ACHILLES:** Agamemnon...

**THETIS:** He's no one beside you

**ACHILLES**

He dishonored me!  
He stole my Briseis  
The woman. My prize

*(Thetis suddenly frightened, leans to stroke Achilles)*

**THETIS**

Calm. Oh, be calm  
Not too much anger  
dear son  
born in pain  
only to die  
do not choose  
to be taken too soon  
by the greedy God  
ruby-stained War  
Calm. Oh, be calm

**ACHILLES**

Like waves at dusk, Mother  
I'm glass-smooth  
And I will not fight

**THETIS** (*Joyful*)  
You'll leave the war?  
You'll go home!

**ACHILLES**  
Perhaps I will  
but first I need  
a deed you alone  
can do

*(She is over-joyed, embraces, cradles him)*

**THETIS**  
I can save you from all  
but death

**ACHILLES**  
It's a promise, then?  
You'll do this favor for me?

**THETIS:** Whatever you need

**ACHILLES**  
Then make sure  
the Greeks lose

**THETIS:** (*Frightened*) Your own side lose?

**ACHILLES:** Someone must lose

**THETIS:** Then Hector wins

**ACHILLES:** Hector is worthy

**THETIS**  
But I fear him  
Him beyond all

*(As though from out of her mind, Hector appears, upstage, a powerful, mysterious figure. She*

*sways, beginning her exit)*

**THETIS**

Seek no answer  
from the sea...

**ACHILLES:** Is he stronger than me?

**THETIS:** None is stronger than you

**ACHILLES:** *(Bitterly)* No one mortal

**THETIS**

But him  
you must fear

**ACHILLES:** I must fear?

**THETIS**

Soon after he dies  
so will you.

**ACHILLES** *(Sharply)*  
But I have your promise?  
The Greeks will lose

**THETIS** *(Sad, vanishing)*

You do  
I know not why  
the Trojans will rise  
I only flow  
Be still and know

*(A bold battle cry, and Trojan soldiers come running on, to surround Hector)*

**TROJAN SOLDIERS:** *(Marching chant)* Hector! Hector!

*(Upstage of them, in kingly state, appears Priam, looking on. In great spirits, they take battle stances, tumble, march)*

**THETIS** *(Voice amplified)*

With the ancient pride  
of Priam their King

the Trojans will rise  
and a thousand spears clash  
with one trumpeting voice  
to boldly rejoice

**PRIAM**

My brilliant son, Hector—  
Rejoice!

*(Thetis and Achilles are gone)*

**HECTOR**

My honored father  
We Trojans strike harder than Greeks  
here under the eyes  
of our children  
and wives

**SOLDIERS**

Hector! Hector! Hector!  
His face grows dark  
as sudden night  
his eyes flash fire  
like lightening in a storm  
as we strike  
in a raging pack  
close on the cry  
of Hector

**PRIAM**

Strike as you will  
fulfilling  
my ancient pride  
for Achilles  
sits coolly  
aside!

*(A great cheering battle cry; then sounds of battle, as the stage darkens and the soldiers swirl into the fight. Last seen – roaring Hector as Priam salutes him)*

*(Isolated light on Briseis. Behind her, the tent of Achilles is swirled into place)*

**BRISEIS**

A prize is passed on  
and no one asks  
Is there a difference  
'tween tent and tent?  
Oh yes

The tent of Achilles  
yes, I remember

If I woke with pain  
on my heart  
for the arbor of clustered grapes  
over my hearth-room door  
or the three olive trees  
on the hill  
there came music  
soft from beyond the drape  
delicate music  
smoothing my tear-stained face

*(Achilles may enter like a dream)*

Light gathered round  
his face and limbs  
moving on him  
like an easy cloud

I shied  
like a kid  
behind its mother  
In the sunset's wash  
of orange gold  
the murmur and sudden laugh  
of old stories told  
new politics and plans  
were never denied me

He minded not  
my listening  
would even stop  
to explain  
though I  
was only a woman

*(Dawn. Achilles sits alone, playing a harp, in his tent)*

**BRISEIS**

But now I am gone  
and he sits with his harp  
alone...

*(Scene expands to Achilles' idle soldiers sluggishly cleaning their weapons)*

**BRISEIS**

...while his soldiers  
grow old  
their purpose in life  
no longer sharp  
out of battle

*(Briseis disappears when the soldiers speak, surly and bored)*

**SOLDIER 1**

Watch where you swing  
that thing

**SOLDIER 2**

Aw, go soak yours  
in brine

**SOLDIER 3**

You, pretty face  
were in my dream

**SOLDIER 1:** And you in mine

**SOLDIER 3**

That old watchdog at home  
was screwing your wife

*(They fight, but Achilles strikes a strong chord and begins a story-song—)*

**ACHILLES**

Sing a song  
of Peleus  
chosen by the gods

**SOLDIER 2:** Chosen for what?

**ACHILLES**

To play a slippery game  
under a blistering  
moon

**SOLDIER 3:** Chosen why?

**ACHILLES**

Why is a long  
winding tale  
Why is a falling  
of stars

**SOLDIER 1**

Then sing "Peleus"  
the song of your father

**SOLDIER 2**

Sing Peleus  
sire to Achilles

**ACHILLES**

Deep beneath  
flowing crystal  
way down under  
clear green waves  
quietly was born  
a thing of such grace  
that the king of the gods  
came near to lose his place

**SOLDIER 3:** That isn't Peleus

**SOLDIER 1**

That's Thetis  
his mother

**ACHILLES**

She knew only  
the melody of waters

the wisdom of the sands  
no trace of the powers  
her grace could command

Old man of the ocean  
he saw Thetis first  
could barely contain  
the mighty thirst  
she aroused  
He wanted marriage

**SOLDIER 3:** That's Poseidon?

**ACHILLES**

But already his brother  
the king of the skies  
had seen the lightning  
in Thetis' eyes  
She must be his bride

**SOLDIER 1**

That's Zeus  
but come to Peleus!

**ACHILLES**

The stage was set for battle  
rival kings of sea and sky  
while the female  
commanding all  
cared for nothing  
but the tides

But before  
the sky-god winner  
could claim Thetis  
for his bride  
a potent sign  
swept down to drown  
these love-crazed rites

**SOLDIER 3** (*Boldly, as oracle*)

A son of Thetis  
will be mightier

than his father!

**SOLDIER 2:** Hah. That will limp his stick!

**ACHILLES**

If Zeus so wed  
the poor sky-god  
would live in dread  
of being overthrown  
by his own  
son

He could not have her

And furthermore  
to be sure  
he must forestall  
by any means at all  
Thetis from bearing sons  
of power

**SOLDIER 3:** Get Peleus!

**ACHILLES**

Yes, Peleus  
A fine man  
but mortal  
A son greater  
than Peleus  
would threaten  
no god

*(Soldiers begin to mime the story; it may be danced in silhouette on the scrim)*

**SOLDIER 1**

So the gods  
showed this mortal

**SOLDIER 2:** Peleus!

**SOLDIER 3:** Where to wait

**ACHILLES**

Behind a jutting rock

on a tiny island  
unknown to men  
Sandy cove  
cave underwater  
inlet sparkling  
turquoise  
“She'll come naked  
to bathe at noon”  
they told him  
so Peleus would wait

They had warned him  
to blind his eyes  
for in seeing her  
he would lose  
the strength to attack

When she came swimming near  
he did not forget  
and pulled a weed-clogged net  
before his eyes  
When he heard Thetis climb  
onto the rock  
he dived  
and caught her by surprise  
She struggled mightily  
turning first...

**SOLDIER 2:** Into a dolphin!

**ACHILLES:** Huge, leaping off the rock

**SOLDIER 3:** But he clung fast

**ACHILLES**  
She turned next  
into an octopus  
squeezing  
the life from him

**SOLDIER 1:** But he still breathed

**ACHILLES**

She turned then into  
a slippery serpent  
then a spiny clawing lobster  
then an ink-spitting fish

So for hours and hours  
he clung gasping  
sticky, stung  
covered with ink  
until she yielded  
lying at last  
herself  
within his arms  
and they slaked passion then  
rolling foam-tossed  
in the waves

**SOLDIER 2:** Come to the wedding gifts now

**SOLDIER 3:** Come to the son!

*(Achilles looks up suddenly, seeing Patroklos exhausted, at the tent's entrance)*

**SOLDIER 1:** Patroklos!

**SOLDIER 2:** How goes the war?

**PATROKLOS**

Not well

*(Soldiers cheer)*

For the Greeks

**SOLDIER 1:** *(Confused)* What?

**SOLDIERS:** Tell! Tell!

**PATROKLOS:** I don't have that much breath

**ACHILLES:** But they'd like to hear

**PATROKLOS**

How can they hear?  
Roaring surf  
against the dry shore  
is not so loud  
as the deafening scream of death  
released by our armies

**ACHILLES:** That's well.

*(Soldiers gasp, staring at Achilles)*

**PATROKLOS:** Achilles, you must come to fight!

*(Achilles turns away)*

**SOLDIER 1:** Was Hector there?

**PATROKLOS:** Hector ran

**SOLDIER 2:** He ran?

**PATROKLOS**  
Close on the heels  
of our fleeing Greeks  
like a lion snapping their backs  
butchering the last  
spurring the rest  
with terror

*(Achilles laughs. Soldiers shrink from Achilles toward Patroklos—)*

**SOLDIER 2 and 3:** Tell, tell!

**PATROKLOS**  
I saw Chromios caught in his buttock  
The spearhead drove  
past pelvis bone  
into his bladder  
  
He dropped to his knees  
with a gasp  
then extending like a worm  
let his dark blood

drench the earth

**SOLDIERS:** *(Reacting lustily)* Uuuhaah!

**PATROKLOS** *(To Achilles)*

That was Chromios  
composer of sweet verses  
Do you still laugh?

*(Achilles does not respond; Patroklos presses–)*

**PATROKLOS**

Abas, only joy of his father  
was struck on the forehead  
over the nose  
smashing the bones  
so both eyes dropped  
and lay in the dirt  
at his feet

*(Soldiers terrified, but afraid to cry, giggle like children at a horror movie)*

**ACHILLES:** Patroklos, what are you doing?

*(But Patroklos expands, like a comic giving his audience more–)*

**PATROKLOS**

Hector even speared Phaistos  
planter of seedlings  
who stumbled  
on the rim of his own shield  
running  
to get to the ships  
so “pop” – with nothing but his belly  
Phaistos received Hector’s spear  
then like a helpless turtle  
squirmed

*(Soldiers’ laughter explodes, but Patroklos breaks down. Stunned silence, except his weeping)*

**ACHILLES**

What is it  
Has your father died?

Or mine?  
You look like a child  
who's run after his mother  
begging to be held  
pulling on her dress

**PATROKLOS:** People are dying!

**ACHILLES:** It's a war

**PATROKLOS**

They're our friends!  
Gods save me  
from anger like yours

**ACHILLES**

What's wrong with dying?  
Life is only a moment  
we all will lose

**PATROKLOS**

You feel nothing!  
You're not human  
Don't tell me  
your father was Peleus  
It was the grey sea  
smashed  
on towering rocks  
that bore you  
in the image of a man  
Where is your loyalty?

**ACHILLES:** I am alone.

**PATROKLOS**

Not when you've pledged  
to fight with the armies!  
Where is your honor?

**ACHILLES**

Ask Agamemnon!  
It is he  
who took it from me

**PATROKLOS**

The Trojans  
have reached our ships  
and you sit  
pouting like a child!  
Will you fight?

*(No response)*

Then let me!

*(Startled, Achilles looks sharply at Patroklos. Briseis and Thetis apart, alarmed)*

**BRISEIS:** No...

**THETIS:** *(Amplified whisper)* No...

**ACHILLES:** You?

**PATROKLOS**

Let me go fight!  
With your men

**ACHILLES** *(Roars)*

With men  
who whine and grumble  
behind my back?!

*(Patroklos scared, freezes. But Achilles suddenly laughs, magically playful)*

**ACHILLES**

You call me  
a pouting child?  
Then let's play—  
Pretend you're me!

Stand here, my friend  
and prepare  
to wear a gift  
from the gods  
Bring me Peleus' wedding gifts!

*(The Soldiers at first surprised, then run to bring Achilles' gleaming armor. Briseis and Thetis, as though in Achilles mind, try to intervene—)*

**BRISEIS:** This is wrong, Achilles.

**THETIS:** The god Apollo loves Hector

**BRISEIS and THETIS:** Do not let him go to the fight!

*(Achilles seems not to hear them, as Patroklos is ritually dressed in his armor)*

**ACHILLES**

Patroklos—

it was you at my side  
when I held my first sword  
you as the guide  
when I took my first run  
through the edging tide

Now

you will wear  
my armor

*(Achilles handles the armor with affection)*

This came to Peleus  
my father

with great gratitude  
on the day he married  
the goddess of the sea  
All the gods rejoiced  
now she was bedded safe  
that Thetis' progeny would be  
no more dangerous  
than me

Wear it in health  
beloved friend

**THETIS:** Don't let him go!

**ACHILLES**

When you stride out alone  
the sight of you

upon the hill  
will chill the Trojans' bones  
They'll think you're me

Fear will take hold of them  
while your spirit will fly  
Unleashed by  
my armor  
you'll do amazing deeds  
You'll push them back  
from off the ships!  
Then come back here

Do not chase them cross the plain  
Do not venture to the walls  
Do not engage great Hector  
He is meat for me  
The sun god fights for him  
So let him be

*(In spot, in Achilles' armor, Patroklos strikes a battle pose; light brightens, isolating him;  
soldiers gather eagerly and sweep away the tent)*

**CHORUS** *(Whispering on the fly)*  
Achilles?  
Achilles?  
Is it Achilles!

**PATROKLOS:** Now this is life!

*(As Achilles backs away, watching, battle begins. Patroklos and soldiers give battle cry, turn to  
attack a swarm of Trojan soldiers who run in to fight them. Briseis, isolated in light, narrates—)*

**BRISEIS**  
As out of clear air  
shrieking  
the hurricane comes on  
so loud was the scream of battle

**CHORUS** *(As fight begins)*  
Is it Achilles?  
Is it Achilles?

**BRISEIS**

Brave Patroklos  
touched by the spirit of Achilles  
Achilles whom he worships  
Achilles whom he longs to be

*(All fight. Patroklos' energy phenomenal; Trojans begin to be beaten back. Briseis speaks at regrouping times, between actions)*

**BRISEIS**

Patroklos wheels  
All Trojans turn about  
seeking only to escape  
screaming death

*(Trojans are pushed back. Briseis cries out to Patroklos—)*

**BRISEIS**

They're on the run  
They've left the ships!  
Return now  
Go back and tell Achilles  
Do not chase them cross the plain  
Do not venture to the walls  
Do not engage...

*(But Patroklos' fury only grows, he leads soldiers chasing the Trojans)*

**BRISEIS**

Brave Patroklos  
touched by the spirit of Achilles  
Achilles whom he worships  
Achilles whom he longs to be  
Plain Patroklos  
beloved of the boy god  
older, wiser than Achilles  
now feels life-purpose  
surging to its peak

*(Trojans, fighting for their lives, escape through their city wall – and create the closed barrier by lining their tight wall of shields against Patroklos)*

**BRISEIS:** Do not venture to the wall!

*(But Patroklos storms the shield-wall)*

**BRISEIS**

But oh the sparkle  
of excellence sublime  
of clear soaring spirit  
like Achilles  
Oh...to be pure hero  
however alone  
like Achilles

*(As he climbs the wall, Patroklos' head is suddenly thrown back, frozen in dazzling light, and he topples down.)*

**BRISEIS**

Three times Patroklos climbed  
Three times he fell to earth  
but as he rose to try a fourth  
high atop the wall  
the sun-god Apollo stood blazing  
and hurled him down.

**GOD VOICE** *(Apollo amplified)*

Proud fool  
Troy will not crumble  
for you

*(As Patroklos falls again, Achilles' helmet topples to the ground. Patroklos stands bewildered, panting, but undaunted. The shield-wall parts slightly and through it comes Hector. The wall, in chorus, keeps repeating Achilles' order—)*

**CHORUS**

Do not engage great Hector...  
Just let him be!

*(As Patroklos tries to gather his strength, a Trojan darts out, stabbing him in the back. Though Patroklos still fights ferociously, Hector bears down on him, throws him to the ground, stabs him in the belly, still gripping his sword)*

**HECTOR**

Achilles sent you to kill me  
and your fool's heart  
agreed?

**PATROKLOS** *(Gasping)*

No need  
Patroklos is no one  
but you do name  
your angel of death:  
Achilles

**HECTOR:** Unless I am his

*(Hector jerks his sword out of Patroklos.)*

**PATROKLOS:** *(Dying cry)* Achilles!!

*(The instant of Patroklos death, Achilles stands, hearing his cry...  
...and Hector lifts Achilles' helmet over his own head...  
...the action freezes in a MIE pose...  
...an unearthly cry of fury and anguish echoes far away)*

**END ACT ONE**

## **ACT TWO**

**Briseis, alone.** *Soldiers behind. Dark. Lights play on the scrim and mimed shadows of the actions described may appear.*

**BRISEIS**

It was a long time  
before I knew  
the kindest of men  
was gone  
Sweet Patroklos  
If he gave his life  
to war—  
War must be a great god

**SOLDIERS**

Patroklos no longer knew  
either sun or rain  
as Trojans swarmed  
like locusts  
upon him  
tearing off the armor of Achilles

**BRISEIS**

Bold Hector longed  
to slice Patroklos' gentle head  
from its soft neck  
to thrust it up  
atop a stake  
to fling his mutilate body  
to ravenous dogs

**SOLDIERS:** But Greeks came screaming down

**BRISEIS**

So like two screeching vultures  
clash  
above a single prey

**SOLDIERS**

The armies met and clawed  
above Patroklos  
One hitched his foot  
to a shield  
whipping its sling  
fast round his tendons  
to drag him away

But that one was hit  
through the cheek of his helmet  
and so  
with soft brain bleeding  
down the spear  
through his eyehole  
he fell as well  
upon Patroklos

**BRISEIS**

Only the horses  
given by gods  
to Peleus  
stood aside  
refused to move  
leaned their heads along the ground

**SOLDIERS:** ...and wept warm tears

**BRISEIS:** ...for Patroklos

**SOLDIERS**

Ranged in a circle  
the armies pulled  
pulled in all directions  
pulled Patroklos  
as at the stretching of an oxhide  
stretching till it's flat  
till the moisture squeezes out  
and the fat soaks in  
so the armies leaned and pulled  
and there was slaughter  
on both sides  
until the earth ran with blood  
beneath Patroklos

**BRISEIS and SOLDIERS**

Until a sound  
struck the air above  
that made them all stop still  
a sound so strange  
unearthly  
piercing not the ear  
but down beneath  
the root of life  
a wail  
that wedged new terror  
even in the boldest throat  
of all who heard

*(Battle sounds build until air is split with a SCREAM heard as high as Olympus and down to the depths of the sea. Briseis and soldiers fade back. Achilles stumbles on screaming, and throws himself down flailing and groaning)*

*(Thetis entering, draws Achilles into a violent dance to match his raging heart)*

**THETIS** *(Urging in rhythm)*

Speak...you must speak  
Let it go  
or the heart will break

*(Achilles will not speak, only dances more wildly)*

**THETIS**

I would Peleus had wed  
a mortal  
instead of me  
For you, my son  
are much too great  
Too great in grief  
Too great in love  
Too great in arrogance  
in bravery  
in anger

**ACHILLES:** *(Scream)* Aaaaahh!

**THETIS:** Too great in anger.

*(Tortured Achilles finally collapses. Thetis catches and cradles him)*

**THETIS:** Speak, speak...

**ACHILLES**

Sweet sweet anger  
As dripping honey  
slows the wind  
it swarms like smoke  
until it chokes  
my heart

I sat  
a barren burden  
on the land  
and let my friend  
be butchered!

Was this why  
you feared  
the monster Hector?

**THETIS:** No

**ACHILLES:** He wears my armor now

**THETIS:** You said you would leave this land

**ACHILLES**

Soon

Mother

you must get me

what I need:

a new armor

*(Thetis alarmed, backs away)*

**THETIS:** You must not meet Hector

**ACHILLES:** Why? If I am the stronger

**THETIS**

Your destiny is clear my son

Two ways

lie there for you

You may choose life

or glory

**ACHILLES**

What life?!

The gods have life

not I

No man can choose

Life is only a thing he will lose

And my second choice is glory?

But what will glory mean

Perhaps a sweet release—

Until I kill

the demon Hector

I will have no peace

**THETIS**

If you kill him

you will die

Let Hector be

·  
**ACHILLES**

Unless I kill him  
I cannot live  
So get the armor  
for me

·  
*(Achilles raises his hand; Thetis bows, dance of armor begins. The chorus mimes assembling the armor made by the Fire God for Achilles)*

·  
**THETIS**

Peleus  
in wedding me  
could not make me  
mortal  
But you  
in childbed  
have done it  
even so

·  
The mortal mother  
coils a line of woe  
no goddess knows  
It grapples her  
with his first cry  
and binds her  
evermore  
A pull  
from him to her  
command inexorable  
to abandon earth and sky  
upon that cry  
saying

·  
I am the cause  
of his life  
and I  
must keep him in it  
Try as he will  
to die

·  
Let the armor woo you  
away from war

It celebrates sweet life  
fashioned by the God of Fire  
to hold no limbs but yours

*(Achilles moves, eager to wear his new armor, but the Chorus wants to sing of it)*

**CHORUS**

The fire-god etched  
the earth upon it  
and the sky  
the great sea's water  
and the tireless sun  
the moon waxed full  
and all the constellations

And in great beauty spread  
two glorious cities  
with marriages and festivals  
a council and a court  
herds of cattle  
sheep and shepherds  
soft fields tilled  
and teams with plows  
A great ox slaughtered  
grape-bearers dancing  
girls and boys  
and all  
upon an Ocean River  
binding strong the outward rim

*(As Achilles receives his glittering armor, drumming signals a procession coming)*

**SOLDIERS** *(Off)*

Nine long years of seige  
but Troy's wall still stands  
Agamemnon!

**THETIS**

The god did these carvings  
of this earth before  
there was war

**SOLDIERS** *(Off)*

Massed armies of Greece  
are beaten down by this land  
Agamemnon!

**THETIS** (*Disappearing*)

Choose life, my son  
choose life

*(A partition screens Achilles from delegation moving toward him; he, donning his new armor, occupies one side; wounded soldiers, led by Agamemnon, also limping, on the other. Soldiers catching sight of Achilles are dazzled, shield their eyes from his brilliance. They may be cloaked to under-dress Trojan uniforms.)*

**ACHILLES** (*Amazed, to himself*)

I feel the armor work  
Life spilling  
its feast of joy  
filling my veins until  
all my fury is distilled  
to gentle wisdom  
and now I see it all  
like a god

**AGAMEMNON**

A long time away  
great Achilles!

*(Agamemnon waits on his side, but Achilles does not respond)*

Too long, may I say?  
Petty quarrels  
shouldn't keep us from...  
Perhaps you'd like news  
of the war?

*(Silence)*

Often I've thought  
our angry words were...

**ACHILLES** (*Interrupts*)

Enough!  
Your news: the war?

**AGAMEMNON**

Well, we...  
Difficulties come upon us  
Hector rages irresistibly, and...

**ACHILLES:** I have some word of that

**AGAMEMNON**

And so many of us gone  
and of those still alive  
the bravest  
lie down among the ships  
all hit by arrow or by spear

**ACHILLES:** Yet you are here

**AGAMEMNON**

Because I want...  
we want...  
We need you back, Achilles  
And there are gifts  
I wish to offer you  
in restitution  
for your injury

**ACHILLES:** Agamemnon...

**AGAMEMNON** (*Loud, insisting—*)

Seven unfired tripods  
Ten talents' worth of gold

**ACHILLES**

You dishonored me  
What does it matter now?

**AGAMEMNON:** And twenty shining cauldrons...

**ACHILLES**

You took  
the bride of my heart...  
Now what did we come here for  
Helen, was it not?

**AGAMEMNON:** Twelve horses – racers all!

**ACHILLES**

Yes, it was Helen  
Each man  
loves his own  
as I loved mine

**AGAMEMNON:** And seven women of Lemnos...

**ACHILLES**

If you gave me  
twenty times what you possess  
as many gifts  
as there are grains of sand

**AGAMEMNON**

Their handwork is superb  
and their beauty...

**ACHILLES**

I would still go home

My father Peleus  
will give me a bride  
My one desire  
is to enjoy with her  
the pleasures  
of my own sweet land

*(Agamemnon, astonished and dismayed, plays his last card)*

**AGAMEMNON**

I've brought one  
who misses you more  
Achilles

**ACHILLES**

All the fabled majesties of Troy  
cannot be worth my life  
Cattle and sheep can be had  
for the lifting  
and tripods can be won

and tawny heads of horses  
but a man's life cannot be lifted  
or won again  
once it has crossed the line

**AGAMEMNON**

I return her to you now  
and before all gods  
I swear that she  
never has been touched  
by me

*(Agamemnon pulls Briseis forward, beautifully adorned, and pushes her across toward Achilles. Briseis lifts a hand to him. Seeing her, Achilles is moved, reaches to her, then stops himself–)*

**ACHILLES**

She should have died  
before I took her  
for all the pleasure  
she can give me now

*(Briseis stung, twists away, looking for the kind man she misses)*

**BRISEIS**

Where's my friend?  
Where is Patroklos?

*(Achilles – struck by her words as if they were a dagger – roars, all his pain and rage rekindled. He strikes down the screen, and Agamemnon sees him bright in his armor. The soldiers cheer, and Achilles' roar winds him straight into battle. Briseis, stepping away from the tumult, narrates. The tent is swirled away)*

**BRISEIS**

Like a lion  
when spear-hit  
spins  
foam breaking on his teeth  
Then deep in his chest  
his mighty heart groans  
and lashing his ribs with his tail  
he rears–  
so Achilles' eyes raged  
full glazed  
for the fight

*(Drums. Fighting. A crush of Trojans Achilles whips like a whirlwind, killing one after another)*

**BRISEIS**

In fury  
Achilles swept – like fire  
raised by whirling wind  
blazing  
through a dry wood mountain –  
while the black earth ran blood

*(Soldiers fall in heaps and begin to fill the River – which may be presented by a long blue cloth stretched across the stage; shaken, to ripple and flow by Koken)*

**BRISEIS**

The noble River  
full with corpses  
heaved in anguish  
unable at last  
to cast his waters  
into the sparkling sea  
so congested was he  
with the Trojan dead  
Achilles killed  
so brutally

*(Achilles grabs an unarmed boy-soldier stumbling past him; the boy slips to the ground, clutching Achilles' knees in supplication)*

**LYCAON:** Achilles!

*(Achilles pulls the boy's head by his hair and recognizes Priam's son, Lycaon)*

**ACHILLES**

How is this?  
The Trojans I killed  
long ago  
rise up to face me

**LYCAON:** My life must be charmed

**ACHILLES**

You silly child of Priam

could the grey sea not hold you?  
I scraped you from a hedge before  
and sold you off in Lemnos

**LYCAON**

Great Achilles, I escaped  
and I'm weary of the fight  
What is it worth?  
You see I've stripped my helmet off  
and thrown down my sword

**ACHILLES:** Then feed the earth

*(Achilles casts his spear, but the boy squirms away, then scrambles back, clinging again to Achilles' knees)*

**LYCAON**

You got a hundred oxen for me!  
Spare me now  
You've cut the throats  
of both my brothers  
My mother  
was not Hector's!  
Spare me  
Only spare me

**ACHILLES**

You cry?  
Why?  
Patroklos is dead  
who was better than you  
And even I  
splendid, invincible  
with a mother immortal  
will die

*(Lycaon lets go of Achilles, lifting his hands to screen himself. Achilles kills him and flings him into the river, which bellows up angrily)*

**ACHILLES**

Lie where fishes  
caring not for anyone  
can feed

on the shining fat  
of Priam's son

*(The River lurches, the armor of the floating dead clang together)*

**BRISEIS**

The rushing water  
spewed  
masses of armor  
cresting bodies  
sputtering foam and blood  
until the River itself  
enraged  
rose on its precious flood  
to curse Achilles

**RIVER GOD** *(Chorus amplified)*

Brutal man  
do not kill more!  
My living flow is choked  
with your glut of death

*(As though rising, the dead challenge Achilles from within the swirling river. Angry at the challenge, Achilles jumps in to fight the River)*

**ACHILLES**

All Trojans die!  
Or give Hector to me  
No howling river  
can save you

**BRISEIS**

Achilles leapt to the middle  
Deep-swirl  
of boiling surge heaved—  
beating down his shield  
with its swallowing waves

*(Achilles is overwhelmed by the river, and disappears within it)*

**BRISEIS**

Achilles swept off his feet  
catching at branches

of an uprooted elm  
dragged the whole cliff away  
The waters ran above him  
and fiercely beneath  
rolling the soil  
from under his feet

*(Achilles struggles to get free as water wraps round him. He tries to run, but the River runs after with soldiers making a huge roar, and River falling on his shoulders. He falls and twists to fight back, surfaces gasping, screams—)*

**ACHILLES:** Gods save me!

*(Red (fire) now streams from the sky, to overwhelm the River)*

**BRISEIS**

When Achilles cried out  
all the gods heard  
so down swept the Fire-god  
hurling gales of flame  
to fight  
the heaving River

*(Flowing streamers – red for fire, blue for water – whipped by Chorus/Koken into undulating curliques that fight for dominance amid loud fire and water sounds)*

*(Gasping Achilles, still fighting, is finally freed, exhausted, when the blue of the River retreats, followed by the red of the fire, and he turns to look across the plain, where a Wall of Shields has formed)*

**ACHILLES**

Great Wall of Troy  
will even you  
do battle?

*(The Wall – chorus members behind each shield – is screaming like a crowd in terror, then through the Wall steps Hector in Achilles' old armor)*

*(The Wall screams, tries to pull Hector back inside. Above the Wall, the head of an old man appears, pleading—)*

**PRIAM**

Hector, my son  
stay inside our wall

Have mercy on me  
We all will die  
if you fall

A young man  
can lie butchered  
still in beauty  
But an old king  
his white hair smeared  
with dung  
and eaten by dogs  
is pitiful

*(Hector salutes his father, but stays rooted, in armor he stripped from Patroklos, to fight Achilles alone. Achilles sees Hector, rears roaring, begins a slow advance. Wall emits a low tone that builds as Achilles moves closer)*

**ACHILLES**

You died  
the moment  
you drew the blood  
of my beloved  
Patroklos

Still there you stand  
brazen  
in armor stripped  
from my dearest friend

Now it will sear your skin  
till flesh and metal blend  
for in stealing it  
you stole my honor

My spirit sears you now  
It can't release  
and fly to me  
until it sees you  
to your end

*(Just as Achilles comes within striking distance, and both brace for the impact, Hector spins and evades Achilles by running away)*

*(Startled at first, Achilles sharply laughs, and runs after Hector. They may run in place with the*

*wall moving opposite, behind them)*

**BRISEIS**

As in a dream  
a man is not able  
to catch one who runs  
nor the one who runs  
to get away

As when a hawk  
swoops for a dove  
but she slips loose  
and flies  
while he  
shrill screaming  
close after  
plunges again and again  
furious  
to take her...

so Hector would make for the gate  
and Achilles race ahead  
to prevent him  
and on and on  
one, two, three times  
round all the great walls  
Until at last Hector froze

*(Suddenly Hector's head is flung back, frozen in dazzling light. Achilles stops)*

**BRISEIS**

For down swept  
golden Athena  
who loved Achilles well  
but to Hector she said

**GOD VOICE** *(Athena tricking Hector)*

Run no more!  
Stand  
and we'll take him  
together

**HECTOR** *(Amazed, to the air)*

You'll fight with me?  
Then Achilles  
die!

*(Hector signals Achilles with an upraised arm. Achilles faces him, waiting)*

**HECTOR**

Let us swear an oath:  
If I kill you  
I will strip your sword and armor  
but give your body  
to your friends  
Will you swear the same?

**ACHILLES**

What oath  
can there be  
'tween a lion  
and a man?

Did you swear  
such kind words  
for Patroklos?!

*(Achilles attacks viciously. They fight. Hector, loosing, looks frantically about)*

**HECTOR**

Athena, help me!  
Where are you?

*(Hector is bewildered. Achilles strikes)*

**ACHILLES**

The goddess tricked you  
She fights for me!

*(At Hector's vulnerable moment, dazzling light strikes them both. But Achilles, his head thrown back, realizing the choice he's making, shouts as he strikes Hector's neck at his collarbone)*

**ACHILLES**

Take my life, then!  
I choose glory!

*(Hector chokes, falls, lies dying with Achilles over him)*

**HECTOR**

As you love  
your parents  
do not fling my corpse away

**ACHILLES**

Hah!  
Dogs strip your flesh  
until their fangs tire  
then birds rip what's left  
off your bones  
To see you eaten raw  
is my greatest desire

*(Achilles pulls his spear roughly out of Hector, roaring—)*

**ACHILLES**

If this is glory  
it's not enough!

*(A moan rises when Hector dies, but Greek soldiers swarm to celebrate, picking Hector's corpse, tearing off the armor. They cheer and shout, but, as armor disappears in pieces, they quiet awestruck, because Achilles still roars, still stabbing and kicking the corpse of Hector.)*

**BRISEIS** *(Apart, in darkness)*

As soldiers swarmed  
to stab the corpse  
again, again and again  
Achilles ripped his bloody armor  
off of Hector  
pierced his ankles  
lashing rawhide through the tendons  
and whipping horses to a run...

*(Uneasy, soldiers back away. The actor Hector has been replaced by a dummy corpse, which Achilles begins, laboriously, to drag, screaming as he does so)*

...began to drag great Hector heavily across  
the dry and rocky ground  
Round and round the walls  
his bare head thumped on stones

*(Now horrified, the soldiers run off. As Achilles drags the corpse, red ribbons stream from its mouth, trailing longer and longer as they go round and round a large circle)*

Achilles, in his grief and rage  
Every day for twelve long days  
dragged dead Hector  
'mid billowing dust  
face down

*(Full darkness now, except for Briseis isolated in light)*

**BRISEIS**

So Achilles embraced  
his purpose in life  
Did he grow  
into a man  
or beast?

I know only  
the night of killing  
is long  
before the soft dawn  
offers peace

*(Dim light on Achilles, alone, perched over the corpse of Hector like a beast of prey, guarding it. Frightened Trojan soldier sneaks to edge and bows low)*

**SOLDIER**

Do not strike, great Achilles  
In deep secret  
honored Priam  
King of Troy  
begs to approach

*(From distance, Priam, disguised and filthy, shuffles hesitantly. Achilles snarls. Priam stops, still far off. His attendant, terrified, runs away. Priam begins a story—)*

**PRIAM**

I sing a song  
of the king of sorrows  
Do you know any such king?

*(Priam takes a step to approach, but Achilles stirs, ominous, and Priam stops)*

**PRIAM**

This king once stood proud  
atop his golden city  
of the shining towers  
brimming with riches of earth

And best among his riches  
he counted  
his fifty fine sons  
And the greatest, the kindest  
among all the fifty  
was Hector

*(Priam, watching Achilles, creeps closer, but Achilles snarls, rearing)*

**PRIAM**

King of sorrows  
he loses them one by one  
his riches, his sons  
and knows  
when Hector  
the best, is lost  
he'll have none

*(Priam stops his song, goes on humming. Pause. Achilles sharp—)*

**ACHILLES**

That king was a fool  
to look for more  
from the gods  
than pain  
A mortal's life  
is spun with sorrows  
though it's true  
he untwines  
evil and good  
by turns

**PRIAM**

Such a mortal I heard of  
named Peleus...

*(Achilles startled, glares at Priam, who goes on humming)*

**PRIAM**

...with only one  
brave son  
who cares not for him  
in his age  
but stays  
far from home

*(Achilles painfully reacts to his own story)*

**ACHILLES**

...robbing other old men  
of their sons

*(Gives a harsh laugh, nearly weeping)*

So Peleus' boy has grown

*(Priam dares a move to Achilles, close enough to stretch his beseeching hand)*

**PRIAM**

Let me only  
touch  
my son

*(Achilles screeches like a hawk, shoots up threatening to strike, but Priam dives to catch Achilles' trailing hand)*

**PRIAM**

This is the hand  
that killed  
the best  
of my sons  
Is it the hand  
of a lion  
or only  
a man?

*(Then slowly, watching Achilles, Priam draws this hand to his lips and kisses it. Achilles crumbles, sobbing. Priam cradles Achilles. They weep together)*

**PRIAM:** Why have we war?

*(Achilles looks up at Priam. Long pause)*

**ACHILLES**

We'll eat  
and then sleep  
I've gone many days without.  
You as well?

*(Priam looks at him, and nods "yes," then—)*

**PRIAM**

First let me  
see  
my son

*(Achilles springs up, sharply—)*

**ACHILLES**

Do not dare  
to anger me!

*(Achilles strides away. Now begins a procession of dead and living witnesses— Hector, Lycaon, Patroklos, Agamemnon, soldiers. They gather round Achilles)*

*(Priam is separate, waiting, does not see Achilles lift high the corpse of Hector, then ritually cleanse, gently prepare the son for the father. The others slowly sway)*

**ACHILLES**

A man  
may gash and tear  
the animal flesh  
of another  
letting spill  
the precious nectar  
of his breathing fluids  
out over the earth

And this is called  
glory

**SOLDIERS:** And this is called glory

*(An animal is raised; Achilles cuts its throat. Priam's fallen asleep where he sits)*

**ACHILLES**

I give it back  
Though I cannot choose  
life  
I return  
to the gods  
their glory

*(Lights, sound and company move, as though in a dark whirlwind. Thetis appears; all characters gather to witness the story's end)*

**BRISEIS**

So deep into the night  
the father and the son  
honored each other  
with feasting  
and at last  
fell into sleep  
which both had refused  
for many terrible  
nights and days

**CHORUS**

Thetis  
deep in the sea  
do not weep  
that he  
is only a man  
and not a god of the sky

*(Thetis raises her arms in a blessing)*

**ACHILLES**

Though weak of body and brain  
I claim  
the courage  
of lions  
to die  
without knowing why

*(Achilles lifts his helmet to arm himself, all others watch; Briseis questions them. They answer,*

*singly and together as a whole society trying to understand)*

**BRISEIS:** So he must die?

**AGAMEMNON:** When the war started

**ALL:** or why

**AGAMEMNON:** no one knows

**BRISEIS:** Forgive me

**ALL:** (*Murmuring*) no one knows

**BRISEIS**

I must try  
to understand

**PATROKLOS**

Man  
is no more  
than man

**LYCAON**

War is a game  
the gods play!

**HECTOR**

We men  
are its pitiful pieces

**AGAMEMNON**

They flick us  
from off their board

**ALL:** with a laugh

**PATROKLOS:** caring not

**ALL:** that our lives drip away

**THETIS** (*Amplified, as a god*)

War is a game

the gods play

Child of man  
can grow  
only high as a man  
has no choice  
but to die

**BRISEIS**

Still I know  
man's glory can fill  
the whole sky...

*(A loud god-laugh that echoes from the whole sky. Priam wakes, hearing the god-laugh, stands, confused, looks at the others, then answers the laugh)*

**PRIAM**

Man's glory can fill  
the whole sky...

*(The others join him, and their combined answer gets louder)*

**PRIAM** and **ALL** *(Softly under Priam)*

...when he stands  
gazing  
full in the eyes  
of another  
saying—

**ACHILLES:** You are as I

**PRIAM:** You are as I

**ALL:** You are as I

**END OF PLAY**

**APPENDIX**

**SHOZO SATO - BIO**

Shozo Sato, a master of Zen arts, was officially adopted into the Kabuki family of Nakamura and is a master of the highest order of the Japanese Tea Ceremony, ikebana (flower arrangement), and sumi-e (black ink painting), and has published many books on these subjects.

Sato is the founding director of Japan House at the University of Illinois, where he is a professor emeritus. In 2004, Sato was awarded the Order of the Sacred Treasure from the emperor of Japan, and in 1992, the minister of foreign affairs of Japan awarded him a Certificate of Commendation for his promotion of Japanese culture throughout the world. In 2003, he received the first Cultural Achievement Award from the Japan America Society of Chicago.

Sato has received national and international recognition for creating a new form of kabuki through adaptations of the plots of well-known Western classics. He has conceived, designed, and directed award-winning productions that have been seen in Europe, the Middle East, Africa, Japan, and the United States. He resides in northern California, where he established a center for Japanese Arts, and freelances as a director and visiting professor in theatre and Japanese arts

### [AUTHOR NOTES](#)

#### **THE PLAYWRIGHT TO HERSELF** (on writing Kabuki Macbeth)

Recreate Macbeth? Sure. Very Funny. I know it backwards. Played the Lady in three separate productions. But to redo it? Impossible.

No matter what I say, the original will haunt me. And it's a very bad luck piece, Macbeth. The Brits won't even say the name aloud.

Ok, but Kabuki needs something different: straight to the point, simple, short, more like lyrics – they jazz around with their voices, you know. It's sex and violence with an ethereal wash of Zen.

So I've done it. And luckily, words are not the main thing in Kabuki. I mean, it's a sensual feast. Of course "hearing" is a sense, but to feed the hearing you also have music, sound, rhythm, voices. And where we must have words, yes, I've tried to find some.

#### **TO THE VIRGIN VIEWER** (who's seeing the Sato/Sunde Macbeth)

In Kabuki Macbeth, you'll see a story that comes from Scottish history. We know it because Shakespeare wrote a play called Macbeth.

In Kabuki Macbeth the story is retold, and in a form that is to the Japanese as "westerns" or musicals are to us: cultural wellsprings, sheer entertainments that celebrate who we are, how we live, and what we like to believe. In it you'll find purity, evil, beauty, violence, mystery, heroism, passion.

It is a world completely strange. Don't be thrown. Just...take a breath, deep as your belly, and let yourself sink – into the brilliant pool of colors. Then, as with your first glimpse of a geisha girl, a samurai film, a plate of sushi – then, slipping into that pool, you'll begin to experience Kabuki.

## **ACHILLES – playwright to audience**

THE ILIAD, with its hero Achilles, is the first, and many would say, still, the greatest work of Western literature. A story of warriors and honor, this epic song echoes the heroic traditions of both East and West.

THE ILIAD celebrates violence – contains passages so graphic even media-soaked hearers squirm. Yet, while it entertains us with gore, it also questions. Of the many nations comprising the Greek armies, and the many nations on the Trojans' side, none is the favorite, none shown finally right or wrong. And this epic does not end in victory, but pitifully, quietly, with an enemy's embrace.

THE ILIAD speaks to our time of worldwide violence balanced crazily against worldwide longing to be done with war. So why not make Kabuki theatre? Why not make a cultural crossing place from this warrior's song? KS

Karen Sunde, a playwright and screenwriter, lives in New York

ASTERISKS in Play List below indicate published plays available for purchase at:

<http://www.broadwayplaypubl.com/alphlist.htm> \* <http://www.dramaticpublishing.com> \*\*

For descriptions of all works, see <http://www.karensunde.com>. Some screenplays are at <http://www.howardshulman.com>

### **PLAYS BY KAREN SUNDE**

*LIBERTY*

*BALLOON* \*

*DARK LADY* \*\*

*TO MOSCOW* \*\*

*SWEET LAND OF FIRE*

*HAITI: A DREAM* (in *Facing Forward*) \*

*NATIVE LAND*

*OH WILD WEST WIND* (in *Rowing to America*) \*\*

*ANTON, HIMSELF*

*MASHA, TOO*

*PLEASE GOD, NO WEDDING OR SHOOTING AT THE END*

*IN A KINGDOM BY THE SEA* (in *Plays by Karen Sunde*) \*

*HOW HIS BRIDE CAME TO ABRAHAM* \*

*TRUTH TAKES A HOLIDAY* (in *Plays by Karen Sunde*) \*

*GENTLEMAN JOHNNY*

*ME & JOAN* (of Arc)

*WHEN REAL LIFE BEGINS*

*TRACKING BLOOD WHITE*

*DEBORAH: THE ADVENTURES OF A SOLDIER*

2020 SEXCARE  
*THE FASTEST WOMAN ALIVE \*\**  
*KABUKI OTHELLO \*\**  
*KABUKI MACBETH*  
*KABUKI KING RICHARD*  
*ACHILLES*  
*KABUKI LADY MACBETH \*\**  
*QUASIMODO (a musical)*  
*SPA (an opera)*  
*THE SOUND OF SAND*

**SCREENPLAYS BY KAREN SUNDE**

*UNDERCOVER PATRIOT*  
*COUNTDOWN*  
*OVER THE RAINBOW*  
*BOULE DE SUIF*  
*SECRET SHIP*  
*HOW HIS BRIDE CAME TO ABRAHAM*  
*IN A KINGDOM BY THE SEA*  
*THE LINE*  
*PARALLEL LOVES*  
*DREAM HOUSE*  
*FINAL QUEST: THE MOUNTAIN OF THE GODS*  
*TRIPPING TAMMY*  
*THE FASTEST WOMAN ALIVE*  
*LOVE HITS EARTH (& Other Disasters)*  
*NEXT!*