

Act3

#11

The characters on stage at the end of the previous number become now cloaked in darkness, where they become a second scenic plane during the following. The sound of an advancing army, with its horses and men, can be heard from the darkness. The army of the king of Kazuragi then arrives at Prince Wakakusa's second residence.

Army Commander: Right men, all this is Prince Wakakusa's second residence.
Let us arrest the traitor!
Soldiers: In irons and chains we shall drag him out!
Commander: Arrest him alive; those are the Empress' orders.
Soldiers: Split in two groups.
We break in from the front and from behind.

Women come out of the residence at the uproar made by the soldiers at the front.

Women: What's the matter here? What do you want this late at night?
Commander: Mindless of his debt to her, the Prince has vowed the Empress' death.
Soldiers: He is obviously a traitor.
Women: That is a lie! The Prince is a kind-hearted man;
This accusation is someone's vicious trick.

The Prince, in Buddhist attire, is brought out of the residence in chains. The women run away.

Women: Ah, what a sorrowful sight!
Commander: The brave prince in such a miserable condition!
Wakakusa: I have devoted the remaining of my life to the service of Buddha.
Non-resistance is one of the Doctrine's teachings.
Soldiers: His conversion is intended to conceal his treacherous heart.
So said our lord Kazuragi.
Wakakusa: The true traitor is my uncle Kazuragi,
Who covets the Imperial throne.
He who offends the Teachings shall plunge into Hell.
A disciple of Buddha shall not fight.
Come then, lead me to the presence of the Empress.
Rather be executed under false accusations,
Than to offend the high precepts.

Bound the prince assumes a praying pose. He then sings his farewell to the women in the following manner:

Take heart! Touched by my cruel fate,
Even the grass leaves on the road to death
I must now walk, wither away.

The soldiers mercilessly pull the prince up, forcing him to stand. The wind starts to blow, followed by rain (maybe an evil spirit flying about). The women break down in tears. Then, one after another they begin to sing. All follow.

Women: It is a lie, this accusation.
Dark are the clouds over Yamato,
Where the wicked have their way.
The Prince having been made to return to the capital
Tomorrow the sun shall eclipse itself,
Stars of ill omen shall turn in the skies,
And an epidemic shall envelope the cursed land.

In the middle of darkness, the women move towards the periphery of the stage. Suddenly the storm ceases. From the dark, the women's chorus is heard.

Women: Venerable Buddha,
Tomorrow, for our sake,
Bring your wisdom over the Empress,
So that she may know the real traitor,
The peace that may revive Yamato,*
And the ways of rectitude.†

(At this point the scene returns to #10, above)

The whole stage becomes bright.

Kiyoto: I must hurry.

Ryurei advances towards front stage.

Ryurei: I shall now play the secret piece for you.

Kiyoto also advances towards front stage.

* CN: Add male voices in this point.

† CN: Midway through this chorus a dim light appears at middle stage, where the four characters from the end of Act 2 can be seen. Choukei and Ryushou leave. The silhouettes of Yamato temple towers present in the background at the beginning of Act 1 can now be seen floating, as if they were a vision. At the point when the penultimate line of the chorus is repeated, Ryurei and Kiyoto reach out for each other's hands, and embrace passionately.

Kiyoto: I shall challenge Mouken, and I shall win.

The stage lights are suddenly lowered.

#12

A gigantic moon rises over centre stage. Gradually the moonlight increases the total brightness of the scene. Opposite a gauze curtain Ryurei (the biwa soloist), having changed her outfit, sits somewhat obliquely at stage left. Kiyoto, at stage right, sits also obliquely, facing Ryurei dead ahead on stage left. A silvery, snow-like powder begins to fall, rendering mystic the image of the two lovers against the moon.

Ryurei begins to play *Ai-en*.

Mouken: (peeping through)

Now this is serious affair. If I were to press Ryurei on this, depending on the outcome of the match... No, I have no choice but to inform the Empress.

As the orchestra picks up the accompaniment, the music increases in intensity, ending dramatically.

#13

At front stage, a main entrance where curtains reading 'Emperor Gensho's Sixtieth Birthday Celebration' and 'Commemorative *Go* Tournament' are hanging. While cheerful music is being played, some men come in.

First Man: The day we long waited for has finally arrived.

Second Man: No more, the *go* match is what we must see.
I definitely bet on Mouken.

Third Man: My bet goes for this newcomer who came today so unexpectedly.
The Emperor has stated that he is like a fierce god.
He is Japanese, you know.

First Man: That might be great, but if he wins,
Will not he take Ryurei away from us?

Second Man: Obviously.
That is why Mouken...

(together with 1st): ...must take the prize.

The men enter the *go* competition grounds. Kiyoto comes in from the entrance of the music room, on the opposite side of the stage. Ryushou follows behind him.

Ryushou: Kiyoto, sir,
I was searching for you.

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You must be alert to one thing:
There is a rumour
That if Mouken feels himself losing,
He may resort to cheating.
Please do be on your guard.

Kiyoto: Thank you.
I shall show you all how to win.

Ryushou leaves. Ryurei comes in, passing by Ryushou.

Ryurei: Ah, finally I could meet you.
I looked all over for you, you know.

Kiyoto: I was also looking for you.
During the match, to give me good luck,
I wish to have on me something that has been worn by you.

Ryurei: This is a hairpin I keep in memory of my mother.
Now, you keep it in my memory, right?

Kiyoto: Ha! What did you say just now?
In your memory! Why?

Ryurei: Not at all;
You must have misheard.

In order to distract Kiyoto's mind, she sticks the hairpin in the middle of a red coif.

Ryurei: There is only one thing I definitely wish you to promise me:
Mouken is also betting his own life on this match.
I wish you to keep in mind from the start that the result is not
important.

Kiyoto: Thank you. (he embraces her tightly)
Would I ever lose to such a coward!

Ryurei: Right then. I shall be praying for your victory.

Kiyoto: I shall win;
For you, I shall win!

A gong sounds, calling the players to the match. They leave. Fully dressed up women arrive at the frontal entrance.

First Woman: The match seems about to begin.

Second Woman: I have just met Mouken;
That man... he was strangely restless and uneasy.

Third Woman: If he wins,
He shall finally be able to make Ryurei his wife.
She has always rejected him.

Second Woman: That would be a pity to see;
If the prettiest woman in Chang'an

Should marry whom she hates.
First Woman: Did you hear?
It seems that the challenger
Is a young and very fine man.
Second Woman: I absolutely bet on him.
Third Woman: Shall we take a peep inside?
All Three: (whispering) Let us do so. Let's go; let's enter.

The women enter the competition grounds.

#14

Inside the *go* competition grounds; centring on a raised throne, Emperor Gensho, Empress Koki, ministers, ladies-in-waiting and others sit in a row. Below them the match area is set. Mouken and Kiyoto are already facing each other. Choukei, who had been selected as referee, sits by the *go* board. A trophy stand, where Ryurei sits, is set at a side. The two opponents play down their stones alternately with grave semblances.*

Ryurei: Win, Kiyoto!

Love, without any notice
Fell on me one day, like lightning.
People can neither prevent nor help it.

Even though he is the husband of my beloved sister,
Love consumes me.

Yet, love is mysterious;
Untellable are its secrets.

Ah, win, Kiyoto!

Mouken is visibly in distress; sweat dripping down his face. Kiyoto plays down his stones with serenity and composure.

Suddenly, Kiyoto reaches with his arm across the board to Mouken, shaking off the sleeve he had innocently brought to his mouth. The black stones fall from Mouken's hand onto the ground. All except the Emperor and Koki stand up in unison.

Choukei: Fault!

Guests: Fault! Fault!

Choukei: The rumours were true;

* CN: During the following fragmentary monologue, under a focus of lighting, Ryurei reveals her most intimate thoughts

When Mouken feels himself losing,
 He swallows his opponent's stones.
 He has now perjured himself.

Guests: He has perjured; perjured...

Choukei: The winner of today's match
 Is Ono Kiyoto.

Guests: Kiyoto has won. Kiyoto has won.

Mouken: Not so, not so! It is Kiyoto who is at fault here!

Guests: What does he mean, that Kiyoto is at fault?

Mouken: I saw it!

Guests: What?

Mouken: Ryurei played the secret piece for Kiyoto,
 She played?

Guests: She played?

Mouken: I caught them in the act.
 Such a rascal cannot be a winner.

Guests: Cannot, indeed.

Mouken: This means death! They both must die!

Mouken is shouting. Guards rush in and grab him. Having heard Mouken's accusation, Ryurei gulps down poison she had previously prepared and collapses. The guests shout. Kiyoto, astonished, holds Ryurei in his arms and helps her to sit. He strikes her back in an attempt to make her spit the poison out.

Koki: Bring us medicine immediately. Make Ryurei take it at once!

The ladies-in-waiting hastily bring an antidote and force Ryurei to take it. Resisting violently, she escapes from Kiyoto's arms making towards the Empress. Halfway she falls exhausted. She frantically strains her voice.

Ryurei: Forgive me, madam.
 I am the guilty one;
 The woman who broke the law.
 To my lover I have taught
 The secret piece *Ai-en*
 The law commands that death be given
 To the one who has taught
Ai-en without permission.
 Do grant your pardon, madam.
 Reproach not Kiyoto;
 Allow him to return to his country;
 To Nara, which holds entombed his wife and child;
 To Nara, where my father and sister eternally sleep.

Kiyoto: (approaching Ryurei)
 I share the guilt with you.
 He who loves you

Shall not set off alone.
(embraces Ryurei tightly)
This country which has attempted to keep hold of me;
Where lives the one who offered her life for love of me,
Has become my second homeland.
Here then, I die with you!

Guards make to stop Kiyoto. Koki holds them back.

Koki: Calm down, Ryurei.
The medicine we had you take is very efficient;
It shall surely clean out the poison.
You are precious to me;
I shall not suffer your death.

Ryurei: Ah, madam,
You are not to forgive me.
(to Kiyoto)
Kiyoto,
I am happy to have met you in this life;
At the very end of this short life,
It was by you,
That for the very first time
I came to know the excitement of love.

Love came without notice;
It struck down like lightning;
I could not prevent it;
It became an untellable secret.
Together: I am happy to have met you in this life;
People are born for love;
People die for those whom they love;
This world is beautiful
Because it overflows with love.

Guests: People are born for love;
People die for those whom they love;
This world is beautiful
Because it overflows with love.

Together: Let us to the yonder world, darling,
It is teeming with the memories of love.

A minister rushes in, his semblance changed, and goes to whisper something to Choukei.

Choukei: It's terrible, sir. A large rebellion has occurred in the northern provinces. An army of a hundred thousand has rebelled, and it is on its way here. Sire, please, you must run away immediately.*

Gensho: What is it with you? Are you such a fool?
Make the war chariots ready. Move it now!† Hurry!

The celebrations fall into chaos. People are running about trying to escape. Suddenly all motion freezes. In the middle of the petrified people Ryurei and Kiyoto sing “Memories of Love”.

Kiyoto and Ryurei: Whatever happens, in this world
The memory of this love shall shine eternally.
Even in life in the yonder world,
The memory of love shall continue to shine.‡

End of Act 3

* CN: Exactly on the year 755 the An Lushan Rebellion broke out.

† TN: Contrary to how he is portrayed here, the historical emperor Xuanzong escaped to Sichuan and abdicated shortly after. The rebellion was finally suppressed in 763, but Tang China never recovered to its previous state. This historical event is best known today as the An Shi Rebellion or the Tianbao Rebellion. With its estimated 32 million victims this is said to have been the second costliest conflict in the whole of human history in terms of fatalities, to be surpassed only by the Second World War well over a millennium later.

‡ CN: As the music ends, Ryurei falls into Kiyoto's arms. The scene remains frozen until the curtain falls.