

Waiting for Komachi

Characters:

Captain Shōsho

Poet, from Yukio Mishima's *Sotoba Komachi*

Iemon, from Tsuruya Nanboku's *Ghost Stories at Yotsuya*

Oiwa, from Tsuruya Nanboku's *Ghost Stories at Yotsuya*

a Boy, from the Sekidera temple

Setting:

The banks of the Sanzu River. A pine tree.

A hanamachi extends through the audience and connects to the stage at stage right.

The hanamachi should blend with the rest of the stage ground to suggest the shores of the Sanzu extend indefinitely.

A worn, wooden carriage bench stands center stage.

Twilight.

Act I

[Before the curtain opens, the audience hears the sound of ki being struck in twenty to forty-five second intervals, as if the pre-show will progress in an expected manner.

However, they eventually shift to the tempo of horse hooves falling, as if they're pulling an unseen carriage. Kakko drums and tsuzumi drums may join in the rhythm. Perhaps the drumming comes from different areas within the theater and playing space—

backstage left, backstage right, from the balcony if the space allows. Silences pierce the intervals of repeating clacks and drumming, creating a disconcerting sense of suspense and anticipation. Nothing about the intervals between silence and sound should be regular; the audience should not be able to recognize when the sound of the "hooves" will start or stop again. Roughly forty-five seconds before the curtain opens, the clacking of the "hooves" restarts at an increasing pace, until they beat so fast that they no longer sound like hooves hitting the ground. Taiko drums may join at this point, depending on

the production's resources. This signals the opening of the curtain, which is pulled aside from right to left by monks and boys dressed as if they are from the Sekidera temple. A fog is revealed to have settled over the stage; it slowly dissipates over the audience to unveil the full setting.

The banks of the Sanzu River are revealed, where the ground is grainy and colored a brownish, earthen gray. Worn paths that appear to have been repeatedly paced upon hundreds of times can be seen in the downstage ground. These tracks even appear down the middle of the hanamachi, which joins the river's banks at stage right. A worn stupa is place where the stage and the hanamachi join, marking holy ground. Nebulous mounds of dirt and pampas grass appear by the banks of the river, but they do not block the view of the constant stream of water that is visibly flowing upstage at all times. The sound of the river lapping at the banks may be heard throughout the beginning sequence until the Poet enters. This may be played on the taiko drum in the geza style or played through speakers. But any sound effects added to this sequence should suggest they have always been present, even before the audience took their seats and the curtain was cleared from the stage. The twilit horizon appears to continue infinitely. At center, a lone wooden carriage bench is placed; it is worn and has not held a carriage for many years. Yet it remains sturdy enough to serve as seating for more than one person. Upstage left, a lone pine stands on a mound, observing, constant in the flow of time. The reveal of this location remains silent aside from the sound of water lapping at the shore for anywhere from two to five minutes. The silence should make the audience unsettled, especially if it is a Western audience expecting the action to start

quickly after the curtain is removed. They, too, are waiting for Komachi. No one escapes this fate.]

[After the silence, the musicians begin to play Takahashi Yūjirō's "Tsugaru Jongara Kyokubiki" from the 1999 album Min'yo: Folk Song from Japan for the Poet's entrance.¹ The Poet is played in a combination of the wagoto and dokegata styles of acting. The hyōshigi are struck once again to signal the Poet's abrupt stumble through the curtain at the end of the hanamachi; he continues to stumble, slightly dazed, to the seven three position. He is haphazardly dressed, with a dirty, darkly colored coat and trousers. His shirt is of neutral color and unremarkable, but his coat features an intricate, finely detailed lining that peaks through the cuffs. His boots and clothes have splotches of mud on them, and he is clearly out of sorts, perhaps intoxicated, perhaps recovered from intoxication but in exhausted delirium. He sports a lopsided Parisian cap, like a courier or writer might have worn in the early 20th century. In one hand, he holds an empty wine bottle. In the other, a large pad of paper and oversized brush pen to write whenever inspiration strikes him. Inspiration, though, has not struck for some time. He strikes a pose by lifting the paper and pen in the air with one hand and countering with the bottle lower in the other; the chorus begins to sing of his unceasing dedication to find a love that fulfills him and grants him the ability to see the beauty in the world as if he's finally alive. As the chorus sings of his days passing other lovers on benches, staring at the stars, glimpsing the impossible, he dances up and down the hanamachi, striking poses of fleeting triumph when he can glimpse in others what it is to have love—

¹ To hear this music, please follow [this link to Youtube](#): Release-Topic, "Tsugaru Jongara Kyokubiki," from *Min'yo: Folk Song from Japan* released January 1st, 1999.

and despair, when he cannot truly grasp it for himself. Before leaving the hanamachi to enter the banks of the Sanzu River, he passes the empty wine bottle and a poem to an audience member. The accompanying music fades to silence as the Poet exits the hanamachi. He walks around the main playing area, examining his surroundings, before taking a seat on the carriage bench. He feels an idea coming on for a poem, raises his pen to begin writing, fails to make any kind of word appear on the page, and lays down on the bench, defeated. He springs upright, tries again, and fails once more. He lays back down.]

POET: Nothing to be done.

[The sounds of the Sanzu River lapping at the banks of the shore are heard once again. The Poet remains in place on the bench—not asleep but lacking the energy and motivation to get up and do anything. He has an arm over his eyes and a leg bent, placed upon the bench with the rest of his body. After one to two minutes of silence in this pose, with the River lapping in the background, the musicians begin to play a Nagauta to accompany Captain Shōshō's entrance.² Captain Shōshō behaves in the middle ground of the aragoto and jitsugoto styles of acting; he is not level-headed enough to be a sabakiyaku, yet dedicated enough to waiting for Komachi that the brashness of the aragoto style only makes itself known at times of intense frustration or emotion. The hyōshigi are struck once again to signal Captain Shōshō's brushing aside of the entrance curtain. He strides confidently to the seven three position, where he strikes a strong pose of devotion yet keeps his face hidden from the audience with a

² Please follow this [link to Youtube](#) to listen to the ogiebushi by Jushin Ogie.

large wicker hat. He is dressed in a straw cloak that covers a crimson hunting cloak and a worn, yet regal, neutral colored military uniform. Rusted medals hang from the chest of his uniform jacket, and his boots, like the Poet's are scuffed and muddy. Intricately flower patterned fabric, silken and purple in color, can be seen in the lining of his military uniform and around the trim of his jacket and pants. The chorus begins to sing of Captain Shōshō's undying love for Komachi; they narrate how it drove him to walk barefoot through the rain, the snow, and the lonely cloudless nights in pursuit of her approval and affection. He struts powerfully up and down the hanamachi as the tale of his fervent dedication is told; occasionally, he poses confidently with his ornamental bamboo staff, which has supported him on every day of his journey in pursuit of Komachi. Before he exits the hanamachi to enter the main playing space, Shōshō takes a medal off of his uniform and presents it to a member of the audience. The music fades to silence as Shōshō takes center stage, posing in a final mie before examining his surroundings. He takes in the Poet's lethargic lounging on the bench.]

SHŌSHŌ: I'm beginning to agree with you. Each day of this journey, I've tried to convince myself that I have not exhausted all my options. That I have not been misled. I continue on my path of waiting, sure I'll find another way to push forward. And yet, I always find my way back here. Just like you.

POET: Like me?

SHŌSHŌ I'm glad to see you here. I thought you would never return. That you'd given up.

POET: Me too.

SHŌSHŌ: Together again! We'll have to celebrate this. But how? [*With a swoop of his cape, he strikes a thoughtful mie, presenting to the audience his position as the heroic, pragmatic brains in their relationship. Then, he prods the Poet's boot with his walking staff.*] Get up and welcome me.

POET: [*Kicking his walking staff away in irritation and resuming his draped pose on the bench*] Not now, not now.

-----**Summary of Action before Iemon and Oiwa's Entrance**-----

- Shōshō asks the Poet where he slept that night, testing to see if the Poet adhered to Komachi's rules of engagement as well.
- After lecturing about the importance of discipline, Shōshō helps the Poet to write a few syllables of a waka honoring the relentless yet repetitive nature of life. The effort required by this work Poet decides to take another break from writing.
- Looking for something else to do, Shōshō suggests that they repent their attachments and asks the Poet if he ever read the Amitāyus Sutra. Shōshō recounts the story of Dharmākara becoming a bodhisattva, then tries to discuss how anyone can attain salvation by repeating the name of Amida Buddha, but only those recorded in the sacred sutras are honored. They have a disagreement over how to attain true enlightenment—with kyogen-esque commentary on religious malfeasance—that ends in a stalemate.
- The Poet gets up and takes in their surroundings, spending a large swath of time staring out across the river in a shared mie with Shōshō. The Poet tries to

convince Shōshō to leave the River's banks; Shōshō reminds him that they can't leave because they're waiting for Komachi.

- Shōshō tries to convince the Poet that they're in the right place to meet Komachi because of the carriage bench and sacred pine. They go to inspect it and find that it appears frozen in time; brown needles that the tree has shed lie at its base. No pinecones or signs of reproductive life can be seen from the tree itself. The Poet argues with Shōshō that it isn't the correct tree nor the correct place. Shōshō tries to get the obstinate Poet back on board with the plan to wait for Komachi, sure that they must be coming up on 100 nights of waiting.
- The Poet gets under Shōshō's skin about needing to go and empty his bladder off stage; Shōshō refuses to speak to him upon returning, but they eventually make up.
- Shōshō suggests that they commit seppuku together on the banks of the river, but they both decide against doing so until they learn "exactly where they stand" with Komachi. They imagine she has a long list of things she needed to reference and check about their standing, including making sure they both wait for the prescribed 100 nights before appearing to them with her promise of love. The Poet brings up the fact that Komachi can't marry both of them, but Shōshō says they'll find a solution to their issues once she comes to meet them.
- They both get frightened, thinking they hear Komachi coming, but it turns out to just be the wind. The Poet becomes hungry, so Shōshō shares some of his military rations with him, even though it's not the exact type of food the Poet wants.

- The Poet questions Shōshō on the status of their relationship to Komachi, wondering if they are bound to her. Shōshō responds that they absolutely are, even though they've never actually seen her. They then squabble over the differences in how they approach the monotony of waiting—Shōshō with action, the Poet with a defeated melancholy.
- Suddenly, Iemon and Oiwa arrive.

----- Iemon and Oiwa's Entrance -----

[A terrible cry from Oiwa is heard from behind the hanamachi curtain. At the cry, the Poet and Shōshō look to each other to try to figure out what to do. The drums, shamisen, and the nohkan flute accompany the following comedic interlude where The Poet and Shōshō show off their physical prowess as actors while “attempting to find cover.” At times, the Poet gestures to the audience for assistance on if he can be seen, at which point the audience’s response prompts to find a “different hiding place.” At the end of the interlude, seeing no other options, the Poet makes a quick escape to hide behind the pine, but finds its cover inadequate. He stays up on the mound, taking a defensive pose with his oversized pen brush and paper pad raised as if they can serve as a sword and shield. Shōshō joins him with his actual sword drawn on the mound, ready to defend them both against the new company that seems to be coming their way. The musicians begin playing the instrumental version of Yuzuki before Oiwa and Iemon burst forth onto the passageway and stop at the seven three position.³ The chanters

³ Please use the following link to listen to [the song on Youtube](#). “Yuzuki,” by Tokiwazu Kiyowada-dayu, Tokiwazu Waei-dayu, Kishizawa Shikisa XI, Kishizawa Shikimatsu, and Fukuhara Tsurusuke. *Japan (Kabuki And Jiuta-Mai Music)*, 1994. I picked this song for its haunting tones and rhythm as well as the kanji of Yuzuki sometimes meaning “to marry,” “moon,” and “dark.”

begin to sing of Oiwa's honor and Iemon's fate as a ronin, and the issues plaguing their marriage. Oiwa, the onnagata, enters first, stumbling and out of breath, almost falling—with grace—to all fours before she fully stops. She is wearing the shiromuku she wore on her wedding day; it has been dirtied by their travels and the years of abuse she's faced at the hands of Iemon. He leads her along by holding the tails of her obi; her mother's tortoiseshell comb remains prominently displayed in her hair, but she is otherwise disheveled and in a general state of severe disarray. She carries a cushion, a bag full of Iemon's gifts from Oume's family for their doomed wedding day, a basket of food, and a large bag that holds their son's mosquito netting, among other things. She struggles to carry everything.

Like in Ghost Stories, Iemon remains an iroaku. He is dressed as a commoner but enters with his two swords at his hips. He carries himself like a ronin. He disdainfully carries a parasol in the hand that he is not using to hold Oiwa's obi. He stamps his feet before holding a mie behind Oiwa on the hanamachi. After the moment is complete, he prods her with the end of the parasol to urge her forward to the banks of the river. The pair hold another shared mie upon reaching center stage, in front of the bench. Oiwa attempts to rest on the bench, but she is prodded once more by Iemon's parasol. This causes her to finally collapse in exhaustion on the ground, dropping all of the items she was carrying. Shōshō attempts to rush to her aid but is held back by the Poet.]

SHŌSHŌ: Release me!

POET: Are you mad? You'll draw attention to us!

IEMON: Stay back! She's wicked. To men.

POET: Is that her?

SHŌSHŌ: Who?

POET: You know...

SHŌSHŌ: Komachi?

POET: Yes! Her!

IEMON: I, Iemon, the famed ronin, present myself to you. *[He lands in a powerful mie.]*

[The Poet and Shōshō attempt to get a closer look at Oiwa, who remains collapsed on the ground in front of them, ignoring Iemon.]

SHŌSHŌ: It can't be her.

POET: He said she's wicked to men.

SHŌSHŌ: That's not her!

POET: *[Addressing the still posing Iemon but gesturing to Oiwa.]* Is this Komachi...sir?

IEMON: Komachi? I am the ronin, Iemon! *[He holds another mie center stage. Silence and confusion from Shōshō and the Poet. Iemon climbs onto the carriage bench, attempting to make his legendary status unmistakable with yet another mie. The audience once again applauds, but Shōshō and the Poet remain baffled as to who he is.]* I am Iemon! *[Silence.]* Does my name mean nothing to you? *[Silence. He gets off the bench and confronts Shōshō and the Poet.]* I say does my name mean nothing to you?

-----**Summary of Action before the Boy's Entrance**-----

- There is continued back and forth between Shōshō, the Poet, and lemon about their failure to recognize him. This enrages lemon further, who claims they should know who he is considering they are all Japanese men tortured by women.
- lemon interrogates Shōshō and the Poet about who Komachi is and why they're waiting for her on his property before admitting he doesn't own the land. He states that the Sanzu River is open to all.
- lemon jerks Oiwa awake and explains to Shōshō and the Poet that she "always passes out" when she falls. He commands her to collect various pieces of his old samurai attire from the bag and place them on him. Despite her presence, lemon claims he has been alone on his journeys for quite some time. Once his attire is complete and Oiwa has laid out his cushion as well as a place for lemon to eat the contents of the basket, he prods her away with his parasol. She goes to stand against the pine tree with their belongings. Shōshō and the Poet do not join lemon, choosing instead to inspect Oiwa upstage.
- Upon closer inspection of Oiwa, Shōshō and the Poet discover she has a scar on her neck that suggests her cause of death in *Ghost Stories at Yotsuya*—and accidental slitting of the throat. They make other comments about her generally downtrodden and disheveled appearance.
- lemon tells them to leave her alone, then forces her to collect the remnants of his meal before taking her place once again by the pine.
- Shōshō and the Poet ask lemon for the bones of his meal; lemon claims they go to Oiwa first. When she doesn't respond, lemon gives them to the two men.

- Shōshō calls lemon out for his gross mistreatment of Oiwa. lemon defends himself and suggests he only behaves in a manner unbefitting a samurai on occasion. Shōshō tries to get the Poet to leave with him because he's disgusted by lemon's behavior. However, lemon stops them in their tracks by calling their bluff, having noticed that they cannot leave their waiting place while it is still daylight or they'll break the agreement they have with Komachi. lemon continues to dodge their questions. He even suggests they ask Oiwa herself why she remains with him and doesn't behave more like Komachi, but she doesn't respond. lemon tells them why he thinks Oiwa stays: "she wants to impress me, so that I'll keep her." He suggests he has plenty of women to pick from, even though the last woman he selected, Oume, died tragically. He repeats Pozzo's: "the truth is you can't drive such creatures away. The best thing would be to kill them," which makes Oiwa start sobbing. The Poet rushes to dry her tears, but Oiwa fights back against him.
- Shōshō tends to the Poet and begs for night to fall. Oiwa takes the comb out of her hair, which falls around her shoulders. As this happens, lemon suddenly becomes incredibly upset, suggesting that Oiwa is slowly but surely driving him insane, killing him in the process.
- lemon collects himself. Shōshō runs off to relieve himself again. Shōshō claims that time has stopped, but lemon suggests otherwise. They all wait for night to fall. lemon begins to draw attention to the sky and how the moon—which has yet to make its presence known—brings transparency and harsh reality to all that

becomes captured in its reflection. He recites some of Komachi's famous poetry that relate to the moon's ability to force a person to face their true nature.

- Iemon, ever the angler, says he'd like to treat Shōshō and the Poet to some entertainment for their kind company, courtesy of Oiwa. He prods her with a parasol to make her dance, where she completes a kabuki dance performance similar to that seen in Dojoji, including costume changes, but in a shortened form. She spends some time in the finery of a woman that has ascended to enlightenment but returns to her ruined clothing by the end of the dance, as if nothing has changed in the process.
- The trio move on to getting Oiwa to speak. Iemon tells them that she cannot do so without her comb. So, Shōshō picks up the fallen comb and rearranges her hair back to a finely organized style with the help of stage attendants. Upon Iemon's command, Oiwa begins to speak of the melancholy and ephemerality of love, the harms that come from delusional attachment, and the ways that honor and status can become warped. She speaks of the power of nature, the way the moon always reveals the truth, and the pine's eternal strength and beauty. Exhausted by her channeling of yugen and the divine, she closes with declarations of the Pure Land to come and divine judgement for all men. Shōshō seizes the comb from her hair, and she collapses, falling silent once more. All three crowd around her, looking for signs of life.
- Eventually, Iemon decides he needs to leave. He sheds his samurai clothing and makes Oiwa collect it all back into the bag. The trio bid each other goodbye. Iemon takes Oiwa's now-extended obi and stretches it down the hanamachi.

When asked why he's doing this, lemon explains he needs the distance to get her up and working. When Oiwa has been revived. He once again prods her with his parasol to cue her to pick up their belongings. lemon and Oiwa hold one final mie on the hanamachi before exiting through the curtain.

- Shōshō claims they've seen lemon and Oiwa before, but the Poet disagrees.

They both sit on the carriage bench and try to find another way to pass the time while they wait for Komachi.

-----**The Boy's Entrance**-----

[The hyōshigi are struck to signal the boys entrance through the hanamachi curtain.

During his entrance, the michiyuki entrance music from the original Sekidera Komachi noh play is performed by the musicians on stage. The boy is dressed as if he is a monk-in-training at the Sekidera temple. He stops at the seven three position and bows to Shōshō and the Poet but does not attempt to join them on the stage. He never fully joins Shōshō and the Poet on the Sanzu River's banks.]

BOY: Captain Fukakusa . . . ?

SHŌSHŌ *[rising]*: Yes, that's me.

POET: What do you want?

SHŌSHŌ: Come closer.

[The Boy from Sekidera does not move.]

POET: Approach when you're told, can't you?

[The Boy does not move.]

SHŌSHŌ: What is it?

BOY: Mistress Komachi...

SHŌSHŌ: Of course! Of course. . . [*Silent pause.*] Come here. It will be easier to hear you.

POET: [*aggressively*]. Will you just join us already! [*The Boy does not move. The Poet tries to go to him but can only make it as far as the ruined stupa. He takes a moment, defeated. Then, he stamps his feet and holds his ground.*] Well, if you won't join us, what took you so long?

SHŌSHŌ: You have a message from Komachi?

BOY: Yes, Captain.

SHŌSHŌ: Well, what did she say?

POET: What kept you from joining us? Did you get lost along the way? Find something more important to do?

[*The Boy does not respond, not sure who to answer first.*]

SHŌSHŌ: Let him be. He brings word from Komachi.

POET: [*violently*]. You let *me* be. [*Trying, and failing, once again to join the boy on the hanamichi.*] Do you know how long we've been waiting for you? For her?

BOY: [*recoiling.*] It's not my fault, Sir.

POET: Then whose is it? Ours? We've been following all of her instructions! The least you can do is follow yours. [*Pause.*] Spit it out!

SHŌSHŌ: I know what it is; he was afraid of the others. He was watching. [*He joins the Poet by the hanamachi.*] You were afraid of the ronin?

BOY: Yes, Captain.

SHŌSHŌ: The dancing?

BOY: Yes, Captain.

SHŌSHŌ: The power of the moon.

BOY: Yes, Captain Fukakusa.

SHŌSHŌ: Do you know those two? Did you know him before he lost his master? Or her, before she lost her mind?

BOY: No, Captain.

SHŌSHŌ: Are you a native of this place? [*Silence.*] Do you belong here?

BOY: Yes, Captain.

POET: He's just telling lies. [*Fighting against the invisible barrier of the hanamachi.*] Tell us the truth! [*Shōshō restrains him.*]

BOY: I am telling the truth, sir!

SHŌSHŌ: Leave him alone! What's the matter with you? He's just a child.

POET: I've been waiting too long. I'm unhappy.

SHŌSHŌ: Waiting too long! Since when?

POET: I've forgotten.

SHŌSHŌ: Your memory is simply playing tricks on you. When the moon arrives in the night sky, then you'll remember the truth. [*The Poet slinks back to the carriage bench, defeated.*] Well? What does she have to say?

BOY: Mistress Komachi—

SHŌSHŌ: I've seen you before, haven't I? You know me, don't you? Know us?

BOY: No, Captain.

SHŌSHŌ: You weren't here yesterday? [*Silence.*] This is your first time here, at this place?

BOY: Yes, Captain.

[*Silence. Shōshō, defeated, moves to join the Poet on the bench.*]

SHŌSHŌ: Well then, speak.

BOY [*rushing*]: Mistress Komachi told me to tell you she won't come this evening but surely tomorrow.

[*Silence.*]

SHŌSHŌ: Does that make this the final night? But I thought we already completed the final night, and she was to come today. [*He pauses, thinking, gathering the strength to continue waiting.*] Surely tomorrow. Is that all?

BOY: Yes, Captain.

[*Silence.*]

SHŌSHŌ: You serve Mistress Komachi?

BOY: Yes, Captain. She is my instructor.

SHŌSHŌ: What does she teach you?

BOY: How to capture beauty. How to keep the pattern of poetry alive.

SHŌSHŌ: Is she good to you? Good to her students?

BOY: Yes, Captain. She illuminates the path to enlightenment for her students.

SHŌSHŌ: She doesn't harm you?

BOY: No Captain, not me.

SHŌSHŌ: Whom does she harm?

BOY: She tests my elders, sir.

SHŌSHŌ: Ah, you have elders?

BOY: Yes Captain.

SHŌSHŌ: What do they do?

BOY: Some tend the temple grounds. Some pray for the salvation of lost souls. Some drink. Some write. Some spend their days waiting to hold what cannot be held.

SHŌSHŌ: And why doesn't she test you?

BOY: I don't know, Captain.

SHŌSHŌ: She must be fond of you.

BOY: I don't know, Captain. I've never asked.

[*Silence.*]

SHŌSHŌ: Does she give you enough to eat? For body, mind, and soul? [*The Boy hesitates.*] Does she feed you well?

BOY: Fairly well, Captain. She shares her stores of millet, beans, and kuwai roots with us. We receive what we need.

SHŌSHŌ: You're not unhappy? [*The Boy hesitates. He stands.*] Do you hear me?

BOY: Yes, Captain. [*He takes a moment of reflection.*] All I can say is that I am. And that I must continue to be.

SHŌSHŌ: You're as bad as myself. [*Silence.*] Where do you sleep?

BOY: Under the watch of the sacred pine, Captain.

SHŌSHŌ: With the rest of the monks at the temple?

BOY: Yes, Captain.

SHŌSHŌ: Wrapped in the light of the moon?

BOY: Yes, Captain Fukakusa.

[*Silence.*]

SHŌSHŌ: [*He removes his straw hat.*] All right, you may go.

BOY: What am I to tell Mistress Komachi, Sir?

SHŌSHŌ: Tell her. . . [*he hesitates, then holds a strong mie at the foot of the hanamichi*] . . . tell her you saw us. [*Pause.*] You did see us, didn't you? Holding true to her requests? Completing her trials? Waiting? For her?

BOY: Yes, Captain.

[The Boy steps back on the hanamachi, hesitates, then bows before quickly turning toward the curtain and running off. The twilight suddenly shifts to the dark of night. The backdrop instantly shifts, as does the lighting on stage. Everything is based in a striking darkness. Suddenly, a moon that seems to swallow the sky rises in the back, above the Sanzu River's banks. Its arrival is accompanied by the shamisen and the flute, which quickly turn to silence once the scenery is in place. The moon sheds an ethereal light on the stage, scattering even to the first few rows of the audience. The river's lapping at the shore can be heard once more.]

SHŌSHŌ: Finally! *[The Poet rises from the carriage bench and joins Shōshō by the hanamachi, his brush pen and paper in hand. He turns to examine the moon and raises his equipment, as if he's finally inspired to write the Big One, the poem that will capture Komachi's heart. The pose of inspiration he strikes may be a mie. After a few moments, he sags in defeat. He moves to find another spot, thinking a different perspective might help. He repeats this sequence a few times without success. Finally, he moves to the pine and sets his materials below it.]* What are you doing?

POET: Embracing separation.

SHŌSHŌ: What?

POET: Reflecting on perspective. The passage of time. Shining light on all that cannot—or refuses—to be seen.

SHŌSHŌ: I meant your materials. What are you doing with your pen and paper?

POET: [*Turning to look at the bench.*] I'm leaving them here. [*Pause.*] Another will come, like me, but with smaller dreams, and they'll make him happy. At least for a time.

SHŌSHŌ: But you can't go on without your dreams! Your materials! What else will you aspire to? What else will you use as a record of your work? Or the nights we've been here, waiting?

POET: Why not? Buddha did.

SHŌSHŌ: Buddha! What does Amida Buddha have to do with any of this? You're not seriously going to compare yourself to Buddha.

POET: I've compared myself to him for my entire life. Really, I think he's more like me than I'm like him.

SHŌSHŌ: But he has attained enlightenment!

POET: Yes. And he had to give up everything to get there.

[*Silence.*]

SHŌSHŌ: Well, now that night has fallen, we've nothing more to do here.

POET: Nor anywhere else.

SHŌSHŌ: Don't be so defeated. Tomorrow, Komachi will come. And then everything will be better.

POET: How do you see that happening, exactly?

SHŌSHŌ: Did you not hear what the boy said? Were you passed out on the bench again?

POET: No. I was preoccupied with other matters. On the bench.

SHŌSHŌ: He said that Komachi will surely come tomorrow. [*He ends in a triumphant mie. A pause. He turns to the Poet.*] Well? What do you say to that? Komachi will come to us after just one more night!

POET: Then all we have to do is to wait here until she comes.

SHŌSHŌ: Are you mad? We can't wait here! We will be discovered when the sun rises, which means we'll break our word to Komachi to visit in secret. We must take cover. [*He moves toward the hanamachi but stops when the Poet does not follow.*] Come on.

[*The Poet begins to move toward the hanamachi, then stops to admire the pine. Shōshō tries to grab him to bring him along.*]

POET: Wait! [*He dislodges himself from Shōshō.*] I sometimes wonder if we wouldn't have been better off alone, each one for himself. Waiting for Komachi. [*He crosses the stage and sits down on the bench.*] She can't love both of us at once.

SHŌSHŌ: [*Without anger or resentment.*] That's not certain.

POET: No, nothing is certain. But think it through. What will we do when she comes?

[*Shōshō crosses to sit next to the Poet.*]

SHŌSHŌ: We can still part, if you think it would be better for both of us.

POET: It's not worthwhile now. Not after all of this waiting. We must see it through to the end. I still need inspiration to strike, after all.

[*Silence.*]

SHŌSHŌ: No, you are right. It's not worthwhile now. We must continue.

[*Silence.*]

POET: Well, shall we go? Before the guards arrive?

SHŌSHŌ: Yes, let's go.

[*They strike a mie, as if bolstering their spirits before preparing to depart. They do not move. The stage attendants close the curtain.*]

End of Scene I.